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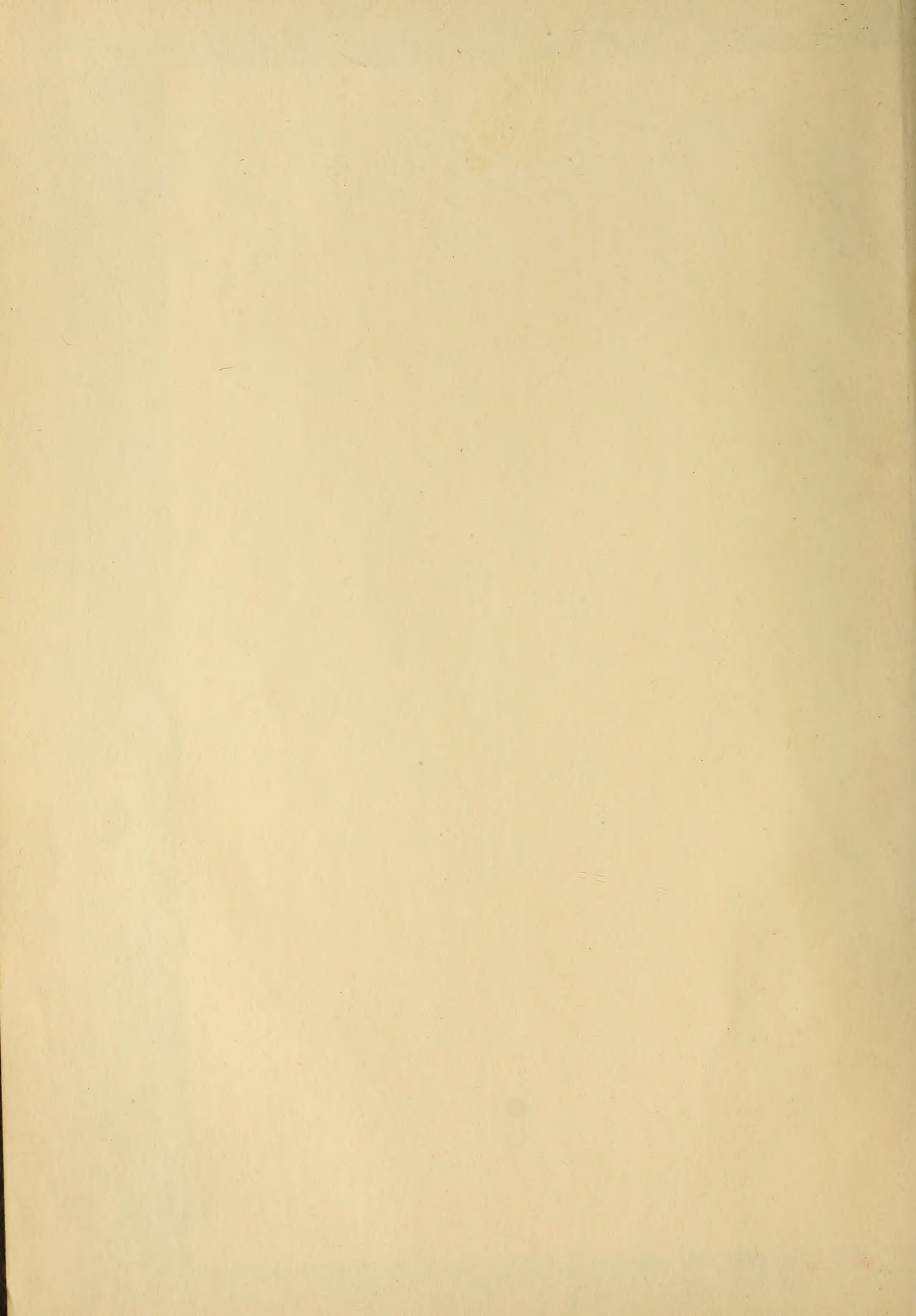


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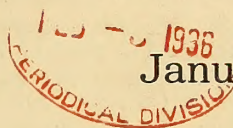




New movies, the

# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

Vol. XI, No. 1



January, 1936

Our Yearly Conference

Genius  
and the Motion Picture

The Dance  
in the Motion Picture

Best Films of 1935

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National Board of Review of Motion Pictures*

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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

- f ANOTHER FACE—Wallace Ford, Brian Donlevy. Screen story by Thomas Dugan and Ray Mayer. Directed by Christy Cabanne. A gangster has his face altered and becomes so handsome he loses his head. Comedy-drama with a lot of amusing inside movie atmosphere. RKO-Radio.
- j BAR 20 RIDES AGAIN—William Boyd, Jimmy Ellison. Novel by Clarence E. Mulford. Directed by Howard Bretherton. Further adventures of Hopalong Cassidy. Beautiful scenery, fine riding in a tale of cattle rustling and bad men. Paramount.
- f BRIDE COMES HOME, THE—Claudette Colbert, Fred MacMurray, Robert Armstrong. Story by Elizabeth Sanxay. Directed by Wesley Ruggles. A light comedy romance of two hot-tempered people who nearly wreck their happiness, but the girl's father shows them their mistake. Paramount.
- f CAPTAIN BLOOD—Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland. Novel by Rafael Sabatini. Directed by Michael Curtiz. Handsome swashbuckling romance of the 17th century—a young doctor whom King James sends into slavery, and who becomes a pirate. Vigorous and likeable, with a remarkably effective musical score. Suggested for schools and libraries. First National.
- f CHARLIE CHAN'S SECRET—Warner Oland. Screen story by Robert Ellis and Helen Logan. Directed by Gordon Wiles. Charlie solves a mystery in which some family ghosts have to be laid. Fairly interesting. Fox.

- f COLLEGIATE—Joe Penner, Jack Oakie, Ned Sparks. Story "Charm School" by Alice Duer Miller. Directed by Ralph Murphy. A light and amusing story, done in musical comedy style, of a ne'er-do-well who finds himself owner of a girls' school. Ned Sparks and Joe Penner are both excellent. Paramount.
- m DANGEROUS — Bette Davis, Franchot Tone. Story by Laird Doyle. Directed by Alfred E. Green. The story of a jinx actress who has brought bad luck to everybody and becomes hard and cynical—and her come-back. A highly interesting character, splendidly acted by Bette Davis, which makes up for some remarkably phoney writing in the dialogue. Warner.
- fj DRIFT FENCE — Tom Keene, Larry Crabbe, Katherine De Mille. Screen story by Richard Yost and Stuart Anthony. Directed by Otho Lovering. Good lively Western of cattle rustling. Paramount.
- fj FANG AND CLAW—More of Frank Buck's exploits in catching wild animals in Asia. Lacks the novelty of his earlier films and gets repetitious, but this kind of thing always has interest if it is at all well done. RKO-Radio.
- f FIRST A GIRL—Jessie Matthews. Screen story by Marjorie Gaffney. Directed by Victor Saville. Story of the vaudeville stage. A novel idea of a girl who becomes a female impersonator and so must assume the role of a man off stage. Lively and amusing. British production. Gaumont-British.
- f FORCED LANDING—Onslow Stevens, Esther Ralston. Screen story by William Boehnel and Morris Helprin. Directed by Melville Brown. The mystery of a murder on a trans-continental air liner. Well managed for interest, excitement and keeping the identity of the murderer hidden. Republic.
- fj GALLANT DEFENDER—Charles Starrett, Joan Perry. Novel by Peter B. Kyne. Directed by David Selman. Story of homesteading days, and the attempts of cattlemen, honest and otherwise, to keep their grazing lands from being divided up into small farms. A new Western star, and a pretty good story. Columbia.
- f HER MASTER'S VOICE—Edward Everett Horton, Peggy Conklin. Play by Clare Kummer. Directed by Joseph Santley. An amusing and light comedy of domestic life and mother-in-law trouble. Some very funny comical situations and an excellent cast. Paramount.

(Continued on page 14)



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## National Board of Review Conference

THE Twelfth Annual Conference of the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures will be held in New York City, February 5th to 8th at the Hotel Pennsylvania.

There will be various demonstrations of the work of the Board, the Conference opening with the delegates sitting as guests of the Committee on Exceptional Photoplays where a film that has been referred from the Review Committee to this special Committee will be viewed and discussed. This Committee is composed of critics and students of the screen who are particularly interested in the artistic qualities of the films, and their discussion is based upon this consideration.

The first afternoon session will link itself to the one of the morning, being a presentation of viewpoints on the films by authoritative critics of various publications.

The following day, Thursday, will be given over to an interchange, through the discussion method, of policies, plans and programs of varied organized community motion picture groups by delegate representatives of these groups, the morning session presenting the activity in the smaller communities with one or two theatres, and the afternoon session, the larger metropolitan communities with many theatres.

Friday will be devoted to a full presentation of the subject of visual education under the supervision of Professor Robert A. Kis-

sack, Director of Visual Education of the University of Minnesota. Professor Kissing will open this particular part of the program on Thursday night at a special session of the New York University course on motion pictures which is being given this year for the second time under the joint auspices of the School of Education of the University and the National Board, and he will continue on the following day to preside at sessions covering different phases of the motion picture program in the field of education.

The important subject of the film in relation to youth which is receiving the very active interest of the Board and its many contacts in different parts of the country will be presented by the young people themselves at the Saturday session. There will be demonstrations of their activities in organization, in review, and in discussion.

Two unusual film showings will feature the evening programs.

The final event of the Conference will be the Twenty-First Annual Luncheon. These luncheons have become so well known with their programs of outstanding speakers and celebrities of the stage and screen that we feel we need give no detail to our readers to arouse their interest.

The Conference is open to all and all interested are invited to attend this yearly meeting of those coming together to hear and to talk of the motion picture.



# Genius and the Motion Picture

By CARL BOHNENBERGER

*The recognition of the motion picture as a growing art form is evidenced by the attention it is receiving from those interested in a critical way in the other arts. Mr. Carl Bohnenberger of the Jacksonville Florida Public Library here presents a viewpoint on the present motion picture with a prediction on its future gained from study and from practical application of that study as an officer of the Jacksonville Better Films Council.*

A psycho-analyst should at some time or other provide us with an explanation of the complex that affects nearly all critical devotees of the film. Shall we call it the "movie-inferiority?" It afflicts everyone who writes on the moving-picture as an art. It has been a psychological handicap in the effort to improve film aesthetics. The only notable exception in America has been Vachel Lindsay who had the poetic insight to understand the motion pictures. This weird complex has always hampered the free consideration of the films from an artistic viewpoint. It is induced by the presence of the machine which overshadows the production. Yet among the other arts, this factor—the matrix—is not notably a handicap. Genius has overcome the difficulties of chemical mixtures on a palette, the handicap of a shapeless lump of clay, or the bleak bareness of ink and white paper. The painter knows quite well that he holds in his hand a wooden stylus at the end of which is a brush. He knows that he must dip this brush into the raw colored matter: his genius has gone beyond these basic things. Hence we have the rhapsodic murals of Michael Angelo, a spiritual experience like El Greco, a magnificent surge of vital life which we know as a painting by Rembrandt, an illusion that touches all the sensations in the art of Leonardo. The printing press is a mechanical invention but it has become a definite symbol of man's progress and intelligence, and the printing of beautiful books and the designing of beautiful pages has not been handicapped by the fact that the machine is the instrument which must be controlled by the artist's hand.

This excuse—the presence of the machine

—for the aesthetic failure of the moving picture is an old and wearisome one. It is not true: the intelligent men who control the industry may know that it is not true because ever so often they allow us a fragmentary glimpse of what a film might be. There are no mechanical barriers to men of genius if they are allowed freely to ply their creative strength against the machine. The machine becomes plastic in their hands, radiant and intuitive.

Time is really the film's greatest enemy. But it is the greatest enemy of all life as well we know: it is to each of us personally that Dobson's words are written on the Chicago fountain: "Time goes, you say? Ah, no! Alas, Time stays . . . *we* go." A book, a symphony, a painting—these things are always with us, close to our hands, they can be recalled. But a moving picture is lost forever when it flickers out. And yet the film is closely bound in symbolic language to Time and Life. Is it not a fine origin for the film that when the Englishman Paul sent in his application for the patent for his moving picture machine in England, he spoke of it as an invention capable of "giving the sensation of voyaging . . . through Time?" It is only during this later generation that mankind has dared to play with the idea of Time. This courage on the part of modern man is indicative of the character of both his strength and his weakness. His strength because it illustrates his ability to reach out into the future and grope the silences—his weakness because, whenever men turn deeply toward the contemplation of the constellations beyond our own, the grip on life slackens and there is danger, unless balance is maintained, of sudden decay and the swift death of our civilization. We know that the Mayans were searchers of the skies, the Babylonians began the art of astronomy, and the African Greeks in the second and third centuries measured and mapped the heavens. Their civilizations and cultures have vanished. But this search into Time is the most courageous gesture that man can make, even



though it may be an unsuspected gesture, because it is the symbol of his complex triumph over his fragile body and his meager brain, and tiny globe and little universe.

Thus the moving picture in its illusion of swift kaleidoscopic adventure into Time becomes endowed with remarkable aesthetic qualities possessed by no other art. The moving picture ploughs into Space and Time. Perhaps if we think of the film more often in this light it will add something to our valuation of it, give it new historical shadows and scientific lights for our personal assenting participation.

Something of this symbolism is part of Siegfried Sassoon's poem:

"And still they come and go: and this is all  
I know—  
That from the gloom I watch an endless  
picture-show  
Where wild or listless faces flicker on their  
way,  
With glad or grievous hearts I'll never  
understand  
Because Time spins so fast, and they've no  
time to stay  
Beyond the moment's gesture of a lifted  
hand.  
And still, between the shadow and the  
blinding flame,  
The brave despair of men flings onward,  
ever the same  
As in those doom-lit years that wait them,  
and have been . . .  
And life is just the picture dancing on a  
screen."

"The moment's gesture of a lifted hand"  
—I think this is the most perfect definition  
of the flight of the moving film.

Perhaps at some time in the future, possibly not very far away, the slender thread of permanency of the film may be strengthened and lengthened: I imagine that each of us will have our own library of films and some simple means of projection—and we shall be able to experience, as often as we choose, the presence of a great film. But that is in the future and by the time this occurs I believe that the moving picture will be in the hands of men and women who are artists.

For creative genius is not merely the

ability to permeate and accelerate a culture or civilization: it invokes new strengths and embodies new purposes over and above the pitiless routine of biology and matter. So far the moving picture has exerted no perceptible influence on our civilization, in the same fine sense that the theatre and literature and architecture have enriched the flight of mankind against the constantly besetting forces of doom.

It was Victor Hugo who remarked that the printing press had usurped the role of architecture as the recorder of mankind. But the cinema,—if it will, if it has the foresight and is wisely controlled—can supplant the printing press as the historian of man.

And I would draw a parallel to architecture to explain what I mean when I say that genius must control the origin and making of films. Architecture is the most significant of all mile-stones of the progress of man; it is by architecture that we have been able to measure past civilizations. The genius of a single architect in every great age has erected and left behind the symbols of his culture.

In architecture, as in the moving picture, many hands participate in the construction. But above all, supreme in the art-sense, is the architect. It is his conception that brings the tower into reality, his conception which directs its building; from the digging of the foundations to the final touches, it is his creation. True, there are contractors, masons, engineers, technicians, craftsmen and sculptors, who share in the building of the monument. But it is his creative genius which has ruled the blending of all these crafts and arts into the mould of his original dream and conception.

At present in the making of American films, a ridiculous situation exists. There is the writer of the film, or "adaptor" more often; the director; and the actors taking part; added to this unwieldy assortment of varying capacities is the technical aspects of the camera, and the mercenary viewpoint of the production and distribution offices, which may at a whim overturn the entire artistic plan of the picture.

Obviously, this situation will lead the moving pictures into a further "passage



end." In desperation the moving picture industry will await a startling technical development to provide a temporary outlet. But neither technical improvements nor old coats turned inside out, will prevent the predicament of the film. A mediocre stride may be maintained for a little while in any art; no longer.

The man of genius shall provide the real salvation. Like the architect, he will control the film. He shall write or interpret its script-drama, direct its actors, control the camera in all its shadings and create the picture wholly; we shall see it as the spirited result of one man's art. All other forms of art come to us from the genius of single individuals. The role of moving picture actors shall of necessity become a secondary one: their interpretation of roles shall stem from the hand of the film architect. Among the bad habits of the film is the belief that actors constitute in themselves the core and substance of a play. The art of acting is one thing. Within itself it flourishes and creates a rich world. But the drama is something beyond the actor:— that is what has made it such an important factor in civilization from the days of the Greek plays to "Strange Interlude." We can speak of the influence on our civilization of Lucian, Corneille, Moliere, Shakespeare, Ibsen, Shaw, Strindberg, Pirandello, Eugene O'Neill. We cannot speak of the influence of Henry Irving, George Arliss, or the Barrymores on our civilization. The historical significance of Charlie Chaplin is the case in point. It should be apparent to Hollywood that he points the way to the future, he writes his own films, directs them, produces them alone. That is genius at work. In his case he is also a superb actor. He, alone among thousands of moving picture actors that have come and gone, remains with us—the common property of the whole world: the untrammelled man of genius whose films are one man's making.

The fact that Hollywood is creatively sterile is clearly shown by the wild flight back to the great masterpieces of literature and the use of practically all famous novels—"adapted"—for the film. Last year: "Little Women," "Treasure Island," "Death Takes a Holiday," "Nana," "Little Man

What Now? ". This year has given us "David Copperfield," "Great Expectations," "Ruggles of Red Gap," with many others in preparation. Hollywood needs creative genius: it has run pitifully thin: it remains alive only by the use of dead men's genius.

It will take time for the artists to control Hollywood. At present the writer of films is a negligible person, an entrepreneur. Genius is not wanted on the Hollywood lots unless it occurs in the case of an isolated actor or director. A typical example is the volume written by Gene Fowler and Bess Meredith, published last year, the first movie scenario ever published as a book. It is the scenario of *The Mighty Barnum* and is a revelation of what the scenario writer must undergo, his cheap compromises, his shallow asides, his rowdiness in place of humor, and the complete maltreatment of characters and situations. Probably either Mr. Fowler or Miss Meredith could have written a trenchant, moving scenario biography of Barnum, but instead they were forced into an ignominious role; they were without artistic freedom of any kind whatsoever; merely "flunkies," just as Mozart once wore his wealthy patron's livery, albeit the Hollywood "flunky" is a well-paid variety, well-paid to lend his name to a production kept down to a moronic level by the medley of varying talents involved.

The artists who will control Hollywood will come as a part of the evolution of the motion pictures. The rising competition of brilliant European films will contribute. But their coming will be revolutionary. The moving picture will become, as the new art of the camera has become under Steiglitz, an artistic, creative factor in the life of modern man. They will be men and women who instinctively understand the medium in which they will work. It will be theirs, as much as the musician holds to his music and the sculptor to his statue. Not the present thing of cruel confusion and hostile forces at war against each other.

In the meantime the film-critic must rid himself of the old obsession that the machine limits the possibilities of the film.

The new synthesis will provide for a re-discovery of the film and its true worth

(Continued on page 13)



# The Dance in the Motion Picture

By JOHN MARTIN

*In the past November issue of this magazine we published an article wherein the author considered the motion picture as a field for special musical composition and herewith is another recognition of the motion picture as a medium for the creative artist, in this case the composer of the dance. It is a reprinting at length from an article in the "New York Times" by Mr. Martin, dance editor of that publication.*

THE general problem of adjusting the dance and the camera to each other should begin to engage the attention of experts in both fields. This problem has two distinct sides to it. On the one hand, there is the matter of adapting camera technique to the needs of the dance. In this the cinema is in much the same position as the phonograph; that is, it is a recording medium, pure and simple. Its mission is nothing more than producing the finest and most accurate record possible of important dance compositions. Trick shots, lighting effects, camera angles, and so forth, are hindrances of the worst sort, because they distort the intention of the dancer and make it impossible for the spectator to follow the dance.

Dance is built of the continuous substance of movement, as music is built of the continuous substance of sound, and its continuity cannot be broken if its design and its significance are to be projected. To be sure, this kind of photography affords no opportunities whatever for the artist cameraman; it requires only expert technical skill and self-restraint. It is, in short, hack work. But to make a cameraman's holiday out of choreographic composition which asks only to be filmed for the records, is an unfortunate as it would be if some eager sound engineer in recording a Beethoven symphony had the bright idea of now eliminating all but the horns, now cutting from the middle of the first movement to some correlative phrase in the fourth, and so on. There is a great need for the preservation in as exact a form as is mechanically feasible of the best dances of our times before they disappear into oblivion as Isadore

Duncan's and Pavlova's dances have disappeared.

There is, however, a second side to the problem which consists of adapting the dance to the needs of the cinema. The screen is a medium which differs radically from the stage arts, and a dancer who composes for it must know its peculiar possibilities and limitations. An entirely new dance form must eventually be developed for film purposes, in which motor sequence is not the inevitable requirement but can be made to give way to a synthetic process of building by fragments. This should present a fascinating field for the dance composer who is willing and able to part with old habits of thinking and practice. It involves not only the devising of movement sequences of the requisite kind, but also the knowledge of cutting and editing film; for part of the actual design of the dancing must inevitably be done with scissors and paste-pot.

Thus far not a great deal has been done along these lines. In certain of the film revues there have been excellent flashes here and there, but generally the dance numbers are either arranged with purely spectacular intent, or else are just chopped-up stage routines. In a more serious vein, Benjamin Zemach attempted something far more substantial in Rider Haggard's *She* but not with complete success for various reasons. Perhaps the chief one was the natural difficulty of treating dancing in this manner when the rest of the picture is directed on the basis of more or less realistic continuity.

Unfortunately, the cinema is too expensive a medium for any individual dancer to experiment with on his own, so that whatever progress is made must inevitably come from the large producing organizations. As a rule they have spared no money in perfecting their technical methods, and no doubt they will sooner or later turn their attention in this direction. When they do, it will open up an extremely interesting new department both for the dance and for the movies.

# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS DEPARTMENT

This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of Exceptional and Honorable

Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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## 1935

LIKE most other years, 1935 hasn't produced many pictures that are likely to go echoing down through time, the memory of them making people besiege the managers of little revival theatres to dig them out of the vaults and bring them back to the screen again. The annual habit of picking "ten best" out of the year's productions seems to imply that the selections made are superlatively good films. To tell the truth, when the twelvemonth list of product has been pondered over and weighed, there is precious little that can be called best except in a relative sense. Few films indeed that seem memorable enough to be perennially interesting or important. Those grouped finally among the necessary tens—domestic and foreign—have most of them been already discussed in these pages, so no greatly detailed summary of them is called for now.

When it came to picking the one best there was no perfect unanimity about it. *Thunder in the East* had enthusiastic votes, so did *Chapayev*, *Marie Chapdelaine* and *Mutiny on the Bounty*. But *The Informer* was always in the lead, and there is nothing about it to be apologized for as a final choice. Liam O'Flaherty's novel had the material for a tragedy of exceptional unity, with strength and depth to it, unusually suited to dramatization for the screen. With Dudley Nichols providing the scenario and John Ford the direction, both of them skillful and understanding, the result was something effectively rooted in character and

brought vigorously to life in the acting of Victor McLaglen and the other men of the cast. But, though made in Hollywood, the whole film was Irish; in its characters, the circumstances out of which the story evolved, the entire atmosphere. No movie of equal seriousness and sincerity dealing with American life has appeared during the year.

Time is proving that there ought to be a special niche for Walt Disney. He can fill it every year, for there is sure to be at least one of his cartoons as good in its way as any five that get into the "best ten" lists. Though more and more of the Symphonies and Mickeys are creeping into the nursery grade, with much cuteness and little tang, this man keeps well ahead of most of the movie cartoonists, providing ideas and devices for watering down by innumerable imitators. It is hard to choose this year between *Who Killed Cock Robin* and *The Band Concert*. The latter has perhaps a finer flight of fancy, as well as some combinations of sound with action that are a marvel, but the version of "the birds in the air" spreads wide and pierces deep in its comment on life as it is lived in the movies. Disney still remains the most original, individual and significant user of the motion picture medium.

*Alice Adams*, deriving from one of Booth Tarkington's less shallow sketches of adolescence, presented such a picture of American home life as rarely gets to the screen. It brought forward a new young director, George Stevens, who is worth watching (he did a good job with *Annie Oakley*, too), and gave Katharine Hepburn, with her ar-



*Victor McLaglen as  
Gypo Nolan in  
"The Informer,"  
chosen as the best  
film of 1935 by  
the Committee on  
Exceptional  
Photoplays.*



resting personality and strangely restricted acting talent, precisely the amount of room she seems to need to perform in most effectively. The whole thing was done in a key of realism that made the happy ending tacked on for the usual reasons a complete waste: it came too late for those who don't like realism, and merely struck a final chord that blared with falseness.

*Anna Karenina* was important mostly because of Garbo, and the chance it gave her for the finest performance, so far, of her career. Besides the portrayal of the heroine, so extraordinarily rich and overflowing with life, the picture also suggested to a surprising extent the determining social background that made Tolstoy's story something more than an ordinary tale of infidelity and the wages of sin.

*David Copperfield* started the cycle of Dickens-in-a-big-way, getting an astonishing amount of the novel into picture length, with charming atmosphere and a life-like gallery of well-loved characters. Everything about it was gratifying to anyone fond of the novel, and some of the actors, notably W. C. Fields, were a good deal more than just competent.

*The Gilded Lily* was one of the delightful sequels of the style of comedy perfected by Frank Capra and W. S. Van Dyke—thinnish plot generously enlivened with humor and human nature. At this sort of thing, when at its best, America leads the world.

*Les Miserables* was another of the admirable adaptations of classical fiction, paring Hugo's enormous novel down to the

bare essentials of a thrilling man-hunt, one of the oldest and most dependable stand-byes of the movies. In it Charles Laughton gave one of his most striking impersonations of pathological fanaticism.

*The Lives of a Bengal Lancer* turned out to have no connection with the remarkable book from which it got its title, but a vigorous tale of British valor and nobility of sentiment in conflict with treasonous natives in India. With the genuine Kipling spirit it carried the excitement and thrill of a good Western into the far places where soldiers of England sustain the white man's burden.

*Mutiny on the Bounty* did something of the same sort for the British navy, with many of the loveliest and most authentic scenes of sea and ships that have ever reached the screen. The power of the motion picture shows itself with tremendous force in some parts of this film, though the element that has called out most praise has been the acting of Charles Laughton, in an impressive variant of the part he played in *Les Misérables*.

Laughton is the high spot in still another picture, *Ruggles of Red Gap*, a period piece of Americana, lustily humorous in a style reminiscent of *Innocents Abroad*.

Most of these pictures got their material from novels, but the skill of movie makers in turning such material into easy running motion pictures has increased notably, with more natural and effective union of picture with sound track. Only in *The Informer* and *Mutiny on the Bounty* was anything achieved that hasn't been done as well before, and no writer, creating directly for the screen, did anything worth speaking of.

The imports from Europe were more numerous in good quality than for some time. France sent us, in her own language, René Clair's amusing satire, *Le Dernier Milliardaire*; the potent dramatization of Dostoyevsky's novel, *Crime et Chatiment*, with its superb cast; the lovely Canadian pastoral, *Marie Chapdelaine*; the moving *La Maternelle*, with its remarkable study of a child, and in English the impressive *Thunder in the East*, technically an almost perfect piece of motion picture making. From Russia

three films done with the traditional Russian vigor and style, but reaching with a new sympathy and expressiveness into the lives of individuals under the Soviet system—*Chapayev*, *Peasants*, and *The Youth of Maxim*. Also from Russia came *The New Gulliver*, important because of a new and vastly entertaining use of puppets instead of human actors.

English films are no longer sharply distinguishable from our own. Exchange of directors and actors, and a policy of appealing to the same kind of audiences, has increased similarities and wiped out differences. One director, Alfred Hitchcock, remains individual and without a peer in his own kind of thing, which is melodrama. *The Man Who Knew Too Much* was chosen as an admirable and typical example of what he does, though *The Thirty Nine Steps* might have been picked for the same reason. The latter, however, falls a little more directly into the line of the Capra and Van Dyke pictures.

For easy reference the pictures picked by the Committee on Exceptional Photoplays as the ten best produced here and the ten best produced abroad are appended arranged in alphabetical order.

#### AMERICAN

*Alice Adams*  
*Anna Karenina*  
*David Copperfield*  
*The Gilded Lily*  
*The Informer*  
*Les Misérables*  
*The Lives of a Bengal Lancer*  
*Mutiny on the Bounty*  
*Ruggles of Red Gap*  
*Who Killed Cock Robin*

#### FOREIGN

*Chapayev*  
*Crime et Chatiment*  
*Le Dernier Milliardaire*  
*The Man Who Knew Too Much*  
*Marie Chapdelaine*  
*La Maternelle*  
*The New Gulliver*  
*Peasants*  
*Thunder in the East*  
*The Youth of Maxim*



Following is the list of ten chosen by the large Review Committee as the pictures they enjoyed most in the past year, arranged according to the votes they received.

1. *David Copperfield*
2. *Mutiny on the Bounty*
3. *The Informer*
4. *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer*
5. *Top Hat*
6. *Midsommer Night's Dream*
7. *Naughty Marietta*
8. *Les Misérables*
9. *Anna Karenina*
10. *Ruggles of Red Gap*

—J. S. H.

## Membership Committee of the Board

### OFFICERS AND FUNCTION

AT a recent meeting of the Membership Committee of the National Board of Review, Mr. George J. Zehrung was elected Chairman to take the place of the late Dr. William B. Tower, and Mrs. Harry G. Grover was elected Vice-Chairman.

Mr. Zehrung's long affiliation with the Board and his wide experience in the field of motion pictures were described in the previous issue of this magazine, telling of his appointment to the Treasurership of the Board, so that he is familiar to our readers.

Mrs. Grover has also had a contact with the Board extending back many years. This contact developed through her interest in work with motion picture organizations both in her own community of Rutherford, N. J., and outside.

She has served as chairman of the Bergen County (N. J.) Parent-Teacher Association Motion Picture Committee and later on the New Jersey State Parent-Teacher Association Committee. She was instrumental in forming in 1924 the Rutherford (N. J.) Better Films Committee which has done notable pioneer work in the community motion picture activity. She held the presidency of this Committee for seven years, and is still a member of its Execu-

tive Committee lending her continued interest to all its activities.

To the National Board she has given service on the Review Committee and on the National Council so that she brings to the Membership Chairmanship a knowledge of the needed service of a Review Committee member and likewise a quite thorough knowledge of community-wide reaction to motion picture selection and classification.

Perhaps readers of the National Board Magazine may be interested in hearing something about the Membership Committee. This committee comprises twelve members who serve in rotation for a stated period and act as a jury to pass on the recommendation of probationary members for the Review Committee. The prospective members meet with the Membership Committee, and preview a picture, they are given a ballot to fill out and this ballot is explained very carefully to them. They then hear all about the Board's policies and activities, and what part the Review Committee plays in the routine and development of the Board's work. The prospective members now become probationary members and must attend at least six meetings and make out ballots with the regular members, they are then requested to meet the Membership Committee at the office of the National Board for an informal conference, at which time the Membership Committee discovers just how much the probationary members have retained of what they were told at their first review. Questions are asked to test both their memory and their general qualifications and they are encouraged to ask enlightenment on any phase of the work they do not understand.

At the regular monthly Membership meeting following the informal conference, the committee weighs each probationary member, and their qualification as a review member is based on their marking of the ballots during the probationary term and also on the understanding shown both in their answers and their questions at the preceding informal conference. Of course they must agree with the Board's policy of "Selection not Censorship," and they must devote at least one morning or afternoon a

(Continued on page 15)

# Young Reviewers Also Name Best Films of 1935

THE Young Reviewers of the National Association of 4-Star Clubs, which is another way of saying "the junior review group of the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures," have made their selection of "the ten best films of 1935" and have rolled up a big vote in favor of literary and historical masterpieces, with a few choices of lively melody for variety. Made without adult suggestion, the choices of the Young Reviewers are considered to be the last word about what the children really like.

Here are the ten in the 1935 poll (listed alphabetically):

*The Crusades*  
*David Copperfield*  
*The Informer*  
*Les Miserables*  
*The Lives of a Bengal Lancer*  
*A Midsummer Night's Dream*  
*Mutiny on the Bounty*  
*Naughty Marietta*  
*Shipmates Forever*  
*Top Hat*

Films which almost made the grade were: *Alice Adams*, *Anna Karenina*, *Broadway Melody*, *Call of the Wild*, *The Dark Angel*, *Roberta* and *The Three Musketeers*.

Some quotations from the minutes of the discussions by the Young Reviewers suggest the thing that swayed their decisions in this year's poll.

*Mutiny on the Bounty* created a lively interest among the boys and girls in the story of the Pitcairn Islanders. Whereas *The Crusades* had given them delightful settings for their knowledge of history, *Mutiny on the Bounty* intrigued them on to a new study, "to read the books as soon as possible," to find out "how the Islanders settled, what they lived on, and what happened to them afterwards." Although they had read and heard a lot about the picture for almost a year, "it lived up to expectations," "the photography and acting were excellent," "the music gave it new depth, new color,"

"the speech in the courtroom was one of the most stirring things ever seen in pictures," "Laughton you could choke cheerfully," "Gable was unusually good—not mushy like he has been."

*The Lives of a Bengal Lancer* was also "different from the kind of picture you usually get," "in leaving out the mushy part, it made it so much better," "it was so well proportioned," "the plot was not concentrated on one character." A girl of 14 thought it might be "great propaganda for cannon fodder," but the boys pooh-poohed the idea. They didn't see any glamour in it, and certainly would not want to be Lancers. "Boys don't go to pictures like this and get all aroused with patriotism; they go to be entertained and have a good time." "A boy of 11 or 12 just sees a lot of adventure." "It isn't the men that get all aroused with patriotism; it's hysterical women."

There would seem to be no doubt that these boys and girls who go to the movies for entertainment find history very interesting even though they judge embattled conflicts philosophically, for their choice of the ten best films of 1934 also included four pictures with settings of historical adventure.

Generally speaking, the Young Reviewers have given renewed proof of their enjoyment of a good story well told. If they surprised many by choosing *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* last year, this year they have fully justified the entire system of public education by favoring Victor Hugo, William Shakespeare, and Charles Dickens.

But Shirley Temple, by comparison, has suffered a precipitous downfall. Last year she ingratiated even the blasé 16-year-olds, but this year—well, in the matter of personalities, youth is sometimes fickle. This year the favored actor is Freddie Bartholomew of *David Copperfield*. And the children feel that there is more to *David Copperfield* than Freddie!



Music continues to charm them; both this year and last the boys and girls chose three musical films, and their appreciation of the musical accompaniment to *The Informer* was noteworthy. In fact, they thought the entire story of *The Informer* was "rather rare," "one of the most unusual pictures," and "the best acting seen in a long, long time:"

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## Book Review

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### Moviemakers

By JOHN J. FLOHERTY

HERE is a book which does not take for granted that boys and girls know all about the movies. Instead, it offers a personal tour through a typical Hollywood studio, under the sponsorship of John J. Floherty as conductor and cameraman. The reader is taken "on the lot" to the "props" rooms, and sits in with the scenario and casting committees. Finally, he watches the "shooting" of a picture and investigates the sound recording.

The book's hundred pages are more than half filled with pictures, presented chiefly with the close-up technique that the films have introduced, but otherwise with a lack of picture artistry that suggests the literary "quickie" rather than Hollywood.

Beginners might find the book an easy prelude to more serious motion picture study.—M. G. M.

*Doubleday Doran, N. Y., \$2.00.*

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## Genius and the Motion Picture

(Continued from page 6)

—a comprehensive enlargement of its scope as it passes into more capable hands, equipped with a philosophy and a sense of destiny.

## An Educator Defends the Movie

PROF. Kimball Young of the University of Wisconsin has a quarrel with those who glibly pick on the movies as the sole explanation of juvenile delinquency and the ultra-sophistication of modern youth. When speaking at a Motion Picture Convention in connection with a meeting of the Wisconsin Federation of Women's Clubs, he pointed out that bad features of movie entertainment are part and parcel of many other aspects of present conditions.

Movie stimuli will react differently on different individuals, he said, in summing up scientific research on the subject. The determining feature is what's on the inside of the person when he comes into the theatre, and that, in turn, reflects his family and neighborhood background. It's not enough to "clean up" the movies. We must also clean up recreational facilities, bad neighborhoods, and low income situations.

In this cleaning up process of the movies he urges a broadening of the concept of morality. Even more fundamental in importance than sex morality is that influencing racial and employer-employee relationships, he believes. The way these problems are handled in the movies leaves a residue in the attitude of the audience, experiments have proved.

Prof. Young objects to obscenity being dragged into a plot in which it has no integral part. It is, he avers, bad art. Although he's inclined to fear it's too late now, he also would like to see a development of the strictly children's movie rather than the picture suitable for family entertainment. As to censorship, he has little faith in it. Also in listing objectionable films, for this immediately packs the houses where these films are being shown.

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PRESIDENT Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia University, declares that "guidance in the right use of leisure is vastly more important than what is now known as vocational guidance."

## Selected Pictures Guide

(Continued from page 2)

- f IF YOU COULD ONLY COOK—Jean Arthur, Herbert Marshall, Leo Carrillo. Screen story by F. Hugh Herbert. Directed by William A. Seiter. Highly amusing comedy of two people who hired out as cook and butler to a man who turned out to be a racketeer. Light and lively. Columbia.
- 
- m KIND LADY—Aline MacMahon, Basil Rathbone. Story by Hugh Walpole. Directed by George B. Seitz. A strange and sinister group of thieves move in on a lady who has been charitable to one of them. Unusual in plot, with a fine melodramatic tenseness. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- 
- f KING OF BURLESQUE—Warner Baxter, Alice Faye, Jack Oakie. Story "The Day Never Came" by Vina Delmar. Directed by Sidney Lanfield. Jolly entertainment that gets better as it goes along, about a show producer who traveled up from burlesque to Broadway. The dance and musical numbers in the climax are among the best the screen has had. Fox.
- 
- f LAST OF THE PAGANS—Mala, Lotus. Story by John Villiers Farrow. Directed by Richard Thorpe. A Polynesian story, with English subtitles, of a young native couple who were separated for a while by white explorers. Good atmosphere, and a touching love story. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- 
- f \*MAGNIFICENT OBSESSION — Irene Dunne, Robert Taylor. Novel by Lloyd C. Douglas. Directed by John M. Stahl. Story of a wealthy young wastrel who having caused two tragedies, adopts the philosophy of living for others and becomes a famous physician. Universal.
- 
- f MILLIONS IN THE AIR—John Howard, Wendy Barrie. Story by Sig Herzig. Directed by Ray McCarey. A light and amusing story depicting life behind the scenes on the amateur hour of a large radio studio. Romance and comedy well blended. Paramount.
- 
- f ONE WAY TICKET—Lloyd Nolan, Peggy Conklin. Story by Ethel Turner. Directed by Herbert Biberman. An interesting story of prison life well acted, which involves a young girl and the convict she falls in love with. Columbia.
- 
- m PASSING OF THE THIRD FLOOR BACK, THE—Conrad Veidt. Play by Jerome K. Jerome. Directed by Berthold Viertel. A couple of days in the lives of roomers in a typical English rooming house. A stranger takes the third floor back and is their Good Samaritan. British production. Gaumont-British.
- 
- f ROSE OF THE RANCHO — Gladys Swarthout, John Boles. Play by Richard Walton Tully. Directed by Marion Gering. Musical romance of the California Spanish Vigilantes during the time when the estates of the early Spanish settlers were being taken by the landgrabbers. Paramount.
- 
- f SEVEN KEYS TO BALDPATE—Gene Raymond, Margaret Callahan. Play by Earl Derr Biggers. Directed by William Hamilton. The adventures of a young novelist in a deserted inn on a cold winter's night. The writer is told he has the only key to the inn but he has a surprising number of visitors. Very amusing. RKO-Radio.
- 
- m SHOW THEM NO MERCY—Rochelle Hudson, Cesar Romero, Bruce Cabot. Screen story by Kubec Glasman. Directed by George Marshall. The story of a young husband, wife and child who happen to get in the way of escaping kidnappers. Vigorous and often tremendously exciting, its frequent brutality counterbalanced by the pleasant contrast supplied by the young people, their youngster and their dog. 20th Century-Fox.
- 
- f SUICIDE SQUAD—Norman Foster, Joyce Compton. Screen story by C. E. Roberts and Ray Mazarro. Directed by Raymond K. Johnson. An exciting story of the firemen, who daily face death. Puritan.
- 
- f SUNSET OF POWER—Buck Jones, Dorothy Dix. Screen story by J. E. Grimsted. Directed by Ray Taylor. The means by which an old ranch owner with no male heirs, made sure his property would fall into worthy hands. A story of the old lawless cow country, interesting, with many good types. Universal.
- 
- m SYLVIA SCARLETT—Katharine Hepburn, Brian Aherne, Cary Grant. Novel by Compton Mackenzie. Directed by George Cukor. Sylvia Scarlett and her father form a small group of strolling players touring the English countryside in preference to a life of villainy in the city. Hepburn's effective playing of a double part of boy and girl contributes far more than the story. RKO-Radio.
- 
- f \*TALE OF TWO CITIES, A—Ronald Colman, Elizabeth Allan. Novel by Charles Dickens. Directed by Jack Conway. A faithful, often stirring screen version of Dickens' novel, with a fine performance by Ronald Colman. Suggested for schools and libraries. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- 
- f TWO IN THE DARK—Walter Abel, Margot Grahame. Novel by Gellert Burgess. Directed by Ben Stoloff. Mystery story that is really mysterious, with many unexpected and sometimes amusing twists



- and a surprising outcome. Well written and directed. RKO-Radio.
- m WHIPSAW—Spencer Tracy, Myrna Loy. Screen story by James Edward Grant. Directed by Sam Wood. An interesting tale of thieves and the Department of Justice, given values above the mere story by good acting and direction. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f WHISPERING SMITH SPEAKS — George O'Brien. Story by Frank Spearman. Directed by David Howard. A jaunty railroad romance, with George O'Brien emerging as more of a comedian than usual. Fox.
- f YOUR UNCLE DUDLEY—Edward Everett Horton, Lois Wilson. Play by Arthur Rivkin. Directed by Eugene Forde. A pleasant comedy about a good-natured man who lets other people's affairs take too much of his time from his own, until he finally revolts. Fox.
- SHORT SUBJECTS
- INFORMATIONALS
- fj \*ARGENTINE ARGOSY (Magic Carpet Series)—Fox.
- f FEMININE INVASION (News World of Sport Series)—Women in sports. Columbia.
- f GANGSTERS OF THE DEEP—Big and dangerous fish. Educational.
- f GENTLEMEN IN SPORTS—Racing, polo, etc. RKO-Radio.
- f GOING PLACES NOS. 16-17—Universal.
- f HUNTER'S PARADISE—How different birds and animals are killed for sport or profit. Columbia.
- f LAND OF EVANGELINE—Beautiful scenery in Arcadia. RKO-Radio.
- f MARCH OF TIME NO. 9—Particularly interesting for sections on Townsend Plan and the Japan-in-China situation. RKO-Radio.
- f P'S AND CUES—Billiard skill. Vitaphone.
- f PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 6—Animal peculiarities; Paris fashions; etc. Paramount.
- f PATHE TOPICS NOS. 1-2—Interesting litems. RKO-Radio.
- fj POPULAR SCIENCE NO. 3—Suggested for schools and libraries. Paramount.
- f SCREEN SNAPSHOTS NO. 4—Glimpses of stars who have died in the past year, ending with Will Rogers in his last polo game. Columbia.
- f SHOOTING THE RECORD BREAKERS (Adventures of a Newsreel Cameraman Series)—Fox.
- fj STRANGER THAN FICTION NOS. 16-17—Odd items such as a fish race, soap lake, etc. Universal.
- f TOMORROW'S HALF BACK—Training future football players. RKO-Radio.
- f WHAT'S THE ANSWER (Spotlight Series)—Amusing, kind of guessing game about phrases used in different sports. Paramount.
- CARTOONS
- fj ALIAS ST. NICK—Color Christmas cartoon with charm and originality. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f BILLBOARD FROLICS—Vitaphone.
- j BON BON PARADE—Scrappy's adventures in Candyland. Columbia.
- fj BROKEN TOYS (Silly Symphony)—Particularly suited for Christmas. United Artists.
- fj LITTLE NOBODY (Betty Boop)—A wealthy little dog high-hats a poor little dog but sees the error of his ways. Good for Humane Week. Paramount.
- fj MOLLY MOO-COW AND RIP VAN WINKLE (Rainbow Parade)—RKO-Radio.
- f MOLLY MOO-COW AND ROBINSON CRUSOE—(Rainbow Parade)—RKO-Radio.
- fj VIM VIGOR AND VITALIKY (Popeye the Sailor)—Again the virtues of spinach. Paramount.

- COMEDIES, MUSICALS, SERIALS AND SKITS
- fj ADVENTURES OF FRANK MERRIWELL NOS. 3-6—Universal.
- f BROADWAY HIGHLIGHTS NO. 5—Celebrities of the gay white way and first night at "Jumbo." Paramount.
- f CHECK YOUR SOMBRERO—Good singing and dancing. Vitaphone.
- f DOWN THE RIBBER—The tables are turned on a practical joker. RKO-Radio.
- f DUMBBELL LETTERS NO. 21—Plenty of laughs. RKO-Radio.
- f PUBLIC GHOST NO. 1—Funny comedy about a man hired to haunt a house. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f RADIO RHAPSODY—Johnny Green's orchestra. Paramount.
- f SEEING NELLY HOME—Old songs. Educational.
- f WILL POWER—Edgar Kennedy's plot to get brother to work. RKO-Radio.
- f WORLD WITHIN—Easy Aces see the many nationalities to be found in New York City. RKO-Radio.
- fj YOU CAN BE HAL!—Funny comedy with monkeys for actors. Universal.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

(Continued from page 11)

week to the work of review. No one is eligible for membership to the Review Committee who is in any way connected with the film industry. There is always a waiting list to take the place of those who are forced to resign or those who are dropped by the Membership Committee for any reason.

It is not the function of the Membership Committee, however, to elect members, they merely reject the ones who for any reason do not measure up to the Board's standards, and recommend the others to the Executive Committee, which committee elects on the basis of such recommendations for a period of six months, and every six months thereafter as long as the attendance, interest, and aptitude of the individual member are maintained.—F. C. B.

NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW  
70 Fifth Avenue  
New York City.

I plan to attend the Conference in New York City, February 5th to 8th, at the Hotel Pennsylvania. ☐

I am interested in further details of the Conference. ☐

Name .....

Address .....

City .....

Affiliation .....



## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures is a citizen body, organized in 1909 by the People's Institute of New York City as a medium for reflecting intelligent public opinion regarding a growing art and entertainment. This is still the Board's function, together with that of disseminating information on the subject of motion pictures and carrying on a constructive program having to do with community cooperation in the advancement and uses of the motion picture.

The National Board is opposed to legal censorship and is in favor of the community better films plan of placing emphasis upon and building support for the finer and more worthwhile films. It is at all times glad to cooperate with any agency to encourage and guide the motion picture in developing its possibilities both as recreation and as entertainment.

It carries on its work through various committees. All members of the committees serve without pay. No member is connected with the motion picture industry. They are representative of varied interests and activities and many are connected with large public welfare organizations or educational institutions.

The General Committee is a body evolved out of the original group organized in 1909. It is the appeal and central advisory committee of the National Board to which policies are referred and to which decisions of the Review Committee regarding pictures may be carried either by the producers or by the Review Committee itself.

The Executive Committee is composed of members of the General Committee and is the directing body of the National Board, charged with the formulation of policies, the election of members, the expenditure of funds and supervision of all administrative affairs.

The Review Committee is a large group of 300 members carrying on the work of reviewing the films. It is divided into sub-groups which meet for review per schedule during each week in the projection rooms of the various motion picture companies.

The Membership Committee supervises the membership list of the Review Committee and recommends the names of proposed new members for consideration by the Executive Committee.

The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays is composed of critics and students of the cinema interested particularly in encouraging the artistic development of the motion picture. It reviews and publishes a critique of the finest films and assists community groups in the showing of unusual films to special audiences. Its pioneer activity has done much to lay the foundation for the Little Photoplay Theatre movement and to stimulate the organization of subscription groups to develop audiences for the support of the creative achievements of the screen.

## NATIONAL MOTION PICTURE COUNCIL

The community or field work of the National Board of Review is conducted under its National Motion Picture Council, through affiliated membership groups, service contact groups and correspondents throughout the country. The National Council assists in the organization and program of work of local groups which are usually called Councils.

These Councils follow a plan initiated by the National Board in 1916 of having a membership composed of representatives from many organizations, cultural, educational, recreational, religious, and civic, so that they typify the original movement for community participation in the development and best use of the motion picture as recreation and education.

The objectives of such organizations are as follows:

To demonstrate through the education of public opinion, the effectiveness of selection and classification, instead of censorship, as a means of forwarding the development of the motion picture and its best uses.

To encourage through open meetings, forums, classes and other means, the study of the motion picture as a medium of entertainment, education and artistic expression.

To concentrate the attention of the public on specific worthwhile films through the publication of a Photoplay Guide to the selected pictures being currently shown at local theatres.

To arrange family Friday night or week-end programs of selected films, and junior matinees of pictures particularly suited to the tastes of children, through cooperation with local exhibitors.

To endorse and further the use of visual education through motion pictures in the schools.

To arrange and promote occasional exhibitions of exceptional and cultural films that would not normally be shown in the commercial theatres.

### PUBLICATIONS

The National Board of Review and its Council as an aid to the groups carrying out these objectives furnishes an informational service through its publications.

#### National Board of Review Magazine (monthly)

\$2.00 a year for individual subscriptions  
\$1.00 a year to Council or club groups

#### Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures

\$2.50 a year when taken alone, available at a special rate of \$1.00 in conjunction with the Magazine.

#### Selected Pictures Catalog (annual) .....25c

#### Special Film Lists .....10c ea.

Such as Selected Films for Children's Showings, Selected Book-Films, Educational Films, etc.

#### National Board of Review—Its Background, Growth and Present Status.....free

#### National Board of Review—How It Works.....free

#### A Plan and a Program for Community Motion Picture Councils .....free



# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

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PERIODICAL DIVISION

Vol. XI, No. 2



February, 1936

## Special Visual Education Number

Reporting Addresses Delivered  
at  
The Twelfth Annual Conference  
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on the subject  
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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

- f ANYTHING GOES —Bing Crosby, Ethel Merman. Play by Howard Lindsay. Directed by Lewis Milestone. Very amusing musical comedy with good music. The action takes place for the most part aboard an ocean liner where a boy tries to save a girl whom he believes is in difficulties. Paramount.
- f \*CEILING ZERO—See Exceptional Photographs Department, page 17.
- f \*CHATTERBOX — Anne Shirley, Phillips Holmes. Play by David Carb. Directed by George Nichols, Jr. Pleasant and human little story of a country girl who thought she had inherited her mother's gifts as an actress. Humorous and often touching. RKO-Radio.
- f DANGEROUS WATERS—Jack Holt, Robert Armstrong. Story "Glory Hole" by Theodore Reeves. Directed by Lambert Hillyer. Entertaining story of the sea which holds the interest and has good comedy. Universal.
- f EVERY SATURDAY NIGHT—Our American Family. Screen story by Katherine Kavanaugh. Directed by James Tinling. A pleasant, human comedy (apparently the first of a series) about a family in an ordinary American town, their problems, good times and adventures. 20th Century-Fox.
- m EXCLUSIVE STORY—Franchot Tone, Stuart Erwin, Madge Evans. Story by Martin Mooney. Directed by George B. Seitz. An exciting melodrama about the "numbers" racket and a newspaper's campaign against it, leading higher up into a fight with organized crime. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f \*GHOST GOES WEST, THE—Robert Donat, Jean Parker, Eugene Pallette. Play by Robert E. Sherwood. Directed by René Clair. Romantic comedy, with more than a touch of fantasy, about a Scottish ghost who was brought to America with the castle he was doomed to haunt. Novel plot, charmingly acted. British production. United Artists.
- f I COVER THE SEA—Steffi Duna, Stanley Morner. Story by Richard Carroll. Directed by Victor Halperin. Story of whaling off the coast of Newfoundland. The plot is trite, that of two brothers in love with the same girl and the sacrifice one makes, but the scenes of harpooning and the simplicity of the fisherfolk make an interesting and at times thrilling tale. Academy.
- f INVISIBLE RAY, THE—Karloff, Bela Lugosi. Screen story by Howard Higgins and Douglas Hodges. Directed by Lambert Hillier. Thrilling and dramatic horror story of the discovery of an invisible ray, which in the hands of a famous doctor brings health but in the hands of a madman becomes a destroying evil. Universal.
- m KING OF THE DAMNED—Conrad Veidt. Play by John Chancellor. Directed by Walter Forde. A gruesome but dramatic story of a prison island. The scenes of the outbreak are well done and the acting of the star and Noah Beery is excellent. British production. Gaumont-British.
- m LADY CONSENTS, THE—Ann Harding, Herbert Marshall. Story by P. J. Wolfson. Directed by Stephen Roberts. Interesting and well acted story about a social climber who weans a doctor away from his devoted wife. RKO-Radio.
- m LADY OF SECRETS — Ruth Chatterton, Otto Kruger. Story "No More Yesterdays" by Katherine Brush. Directed by Marion Gering. A rather strange romance of an older and younger sister and two men, with a surprise situation that involves the romance in many difficulties. Columbia.
- f LEAVENWORTH CASE, THE — Norman Foster, Maude Eburne. Novel by Anna Katherine Green. Directed by Lewis D. Collins. An old popular favorite among detective tales, well screened. Republic.
- f LONE WOLF RETURNS, THE—Melvyn Douglas, Gail Patrick. Novel by Louis Joseph Vance. Directed by Roy William Neill. The notorious jewel thief reforms under the influence of love. Columbia.
- m \*MATERNELLE, LA — Madeleine Renaud, Paulette Goddard. Novel by Leon Frapic. Directed by Jean Benoit-Levy and Marie Epstein. With most of its action centering about

(Continued on page 16)



# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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## Reporting the Board's Annual Conference

THE Twelfth Annual Conference of the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures was held in New York City, Hotel Pennsylvania, February 5th to 8th. The program covered four aspects of the motion picture. First, the motion picture as entertainment, the general run of movies in the theatres for the pleasure of the public; second, the motion picture as a cultural medium; third, the motion picture as an educational tool; fourth, the motion picture in its relation to youth.

As is our custom we plan to present in this magazine the various Conference addresses, both for the benefit of those who were in attendance at the Conference, and have asked for them, and for our readers who were not, but who are likewise interested in these subjects.

In this first issue of the magazine following the Conference, we are printing as many as possible of the talks made at the two sessions devoted to the subject—"Cultural and Teaching Applications of the Motion Picture: Progress and Possibilities."

At one of these sessions the presiding officer was Dr. Frederic M. Thrasher. His contribution is given first as one keynote of the Conference, followed by those of other speakers. Additional talks on the

subject of visual education will appear in the next issue of this publication, and thus these two issues will offer informative material by authoritative speakers from colleges and schools and other educational institutions, on the making and the application of the motion picture as a teaching instrument. Other Conference addresses on the other subjects treated at the Conference will follow in future magazines.

Many celebrities of the motion picture world were on the dais at the Twenty-first Annual Luncheon, the culminating event of the four-day Conference. These included Harry M. Warner, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Edward G. Robinson, John Beal, Blanche Yurka, Harriet Hilliard, Ernest Truex, Tillie Losch, William Bakewell, Virginia Reid, Ben Lucien Burman, W. G. Van Schmus, Director of Radio City Music Hall, Ed Kuykendall, President of the Motion Picture Theatre Owners of America, and many others. In forthcoming issues of the magazine we will publish their talks and remarks, bringing not only the educational interest in the motion picture to our readers, but something of Hollywood also, as it was brought to the Conference delegates, representatives from community councils and other groups, who had gathered from many parts of the country.

We wish to offer here a word of explanation and apology for the lateness of this issue. It was held to include certain of the addresses delivered at the recent Conference of the Board. Many of our readers were present and asked for the speeches in printed form and our other readers who were not present may find them of like interest and will thus forgive the delay in receipt of the Magazine necessitated by the reporting and editing of the talks into manuscript form.

# The President's Message

ON this occasion of your Twelfth Annual Conference, I take pleasure in congratulating the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures upon its record of achievement. You have done important work in an important field.

While necessarily conforming to the normal requirements of entertainment, I believe our motion pictures should be sane and salutary—enlightening and mentally stimulating—expressive of the best ideals of our community consciousness. This undoubtedly can be accomplished without subjecting the industry to onerous restrictions. Intelligent friends of the motion picture should strive to direct its influence toward ends that are recognized as socially desirable. And that purpose, as I see it, finds an excellent em-

bodiment in the activities of your National Board of Review.

Your program for the enhancement of the average quality of motion pictures—and particularly for their heightened usefulness in the educational and juvenile spheres—is to be commended. Your work should continue to be especially valuable because it represents a voluntary civic effort—arising from the vision and the public spirit of citizens who are intent upon making our life progressively finer.

I extend to the National Board of Review my sincere good wishes for a successful conference.

Very sincerely yours,

(signed) FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

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## Motion Pictures and the Social Sciences

By DR. FREDERIC M. THRASHER

*Dr. Thrasher is Associate Professor of Education at New York University. In his work at the University he is conducting, under the joint auspices of the University and the National Board of Review, the first general course in the motion picture covering its artistic, social and educational aspects. He is a member of the Executive Committee of the Board and Secretary of the National Crime Prevention Institute, among other offices.*

THE potentialities of the motion picture as an instrument of education have never been realized either by educators or by laymen. In no field is this lack of realization more marked than in the social sciences. The well-made motion picture is one of the most effective of all educational devices, not only in imparting information but in stimulating the emotions and changing social attitudes which are the very dynamics of social action. This fact is recognized practically by the oft-expressed fear of propaganda in motion pictures. Soviet Russia is one of the few countries in the world today which is practically at-

tempting a full utilization of the motion picture in the achievement of its social objectives.

In no other place on the globe can the motion picture serve a more useful purpose as an instrument of education than in America where social changes have been too rapid and too pronounced to enable social institutions to keep pace with them.

Any unbiased survey of a typical American community just now reveals widespread social disorganization. An impartial observer of American life before the depression and indeed before 1914 could not have missed the fact that social disorganization was a striking characteristic then as well as now. This problem, therefore antedates both the depression and the War. It is more or less inherent in a social order motivated largely by "rugged individualism." Briefly it grows out of the fact that many important social functions have been performed by institutions lagging far behind the demands made upon them because of swiftly



changing economic and social conditions. Another important element in the situation is the fact that most of our social institutions are strongly motivated by institutional ideals and policies which have been formulated independently of the rest of the community. The result has been the development of a social order whose fundamental characteristic is disorder. In spite of some significant exceptions here and there, social disorganization is prevalent and outstanding in the United States and with all its evil consequences of wasted man-power and resources and of social maladjustment and privation, it is a blasting indictment of a country that advertises so enthusiastically its achievements in the field of education, social work, and community organization.

We are finally beginning to realize that some of our social problems such as crime and juvenile delinquency which have persisted for many years are not due to the entrance into the picture of new forces growing out of war or economic crisis. On the contrary they are merely persistent and costly results of basic community disorganization which has been little affected except to be made somewhat more acute either by war or depression. Now to come to the point, the trouble is exactly this: that delinquency and crime, along with other social problems have lacked a community planning approach which long ago should have pointed a way to their adjustment. This is but one example of many social problems pressing for a solution—many of them so serious that they threaten the very fabric and structure of a democracy with the danger that they may even undermine the basic elements in our civilization.

These problems are encountered in every field of the social sciences—economics, political science, and sociology. They include the problems of capital and labor, unemployment relief, slum clearance, living wages and decent working conditions, farm relief, social insurance and security, and many others in which definite economic issues are involved. In addition there is a whole series of problems related to the functioning of democratic governmental institutions: the dangers of Fascism; centralization versus decentralization of governmental functions;

and graft and political corruption particularly in local government and municipalities. The field of sociology likewise embraces many problems of grave importance such as divorce, racial relations, immigrant heritages and cultural conflicts, crime, and community disorganization growing out of the social inadequacy and lack of articulation of social institutions.

Effective teaching in the social sciences demands that these problems be presented fully and impartially and that school children be given a thorough knowledge of the issues involved so that these children as adults may be prepared to participate intelligently in the solution of these problems. Adult education in the social sciences is also necessary, if these serious social maladjustments are to be overcome. In both instances there is no more potent instrument of education than the motion picture.

Teaching in the social sciences—civics, economics, and sociology—may be deadly dull. Such teaching may indeed result in the ability of a child to pass a pencil and paper test on institutions as they are theoretically supposed to be, but it takes something more than academic testing to make democracy effective. Social science teaching needs to be rejuvenated and there is no single teaching device which can make it come to life so effectively as the motion picture.

Democracy can be made to live on the screen, to live ideally and practically in a vivid way that will leave indelible impressions upon the plastic mind of youth. Its strength and weaknesses can be brought out by the scientific knowledge and balanced judgment of the social scientist in co-operation with the expert techniques of the scenarist, the scenic artist, the director, the actor, and the cameraman.

It is admitted that two distinct purposes are to be served in motion pictures used as instruments of visual education in the social science field. The first of these is one of imparting knowledge and achieving clarity of explanation. Such a problem would be that of making clear the operation of a governmental unit, or describing the workings of a prison, or presenting graphically the cost of war in economic

terms. The animated cartoon has a very important place in this type of educational picture.

It is not enough, however, for the pupil to have a clear grasp of the functioning of social institutions, important as this may be. It is equally important that both children and adults be given, in addition to an understanding of social problems a will to act with reference to these problems and institutions. Not only must they understand democracy but they must believe in democracy, must support its institutions and must participate actively and constructively in democratic processes. It is not enough to have a clear comprehension of the meaning and necessity for the juvenile court, guidance clinic, probation and parole, and community reorganization for crime prevention. There must be, in addition, an active opinion and support of these social devices which will maintain them efficiently. Citizenship, therefore, does not depend upon information alone, but upon the habits of feeling and acting which are deeply rooted in our sentiments and attitudes.

It is here that the motion picture has a prime function to perform, because it has demonstrated that it can create sentiments, that it can change attitudes. Motion pictures can make us hate the Negro or can create in us attitudes of tolerance and co-operation. They can make us love our parents and show consideration for them. They can make us hate war or love it. They can make us friendly and tolerant of diverse nationalities and economic and social strata in the population, or they can create in us disdain, fear, and distrust. They can make us appreciate the contribution of science to human progress and generate attitudes of respect for and support of scientific research. A good example of this very thing is *The Story of Louis Pasteur*, one of the greatest pictures ever made in Hollywood and I predict that it will be rated as the best picture of 1936. The significance of this picture is not that it presents the accurate techniques of science, but that it is deeply touching, that it moves its audience to tears for social values that are truly significant and not the maudlin sentimentality of the "tear-jerker." This is the educa-

tional talking film par excellence. There is one other great educational film that stands in the same class, but whose fundamental purpose is clarity of explanation presented with dramatic cogency; that is *The Human Adventure*, the great story of Dr. Breasted's reconstruction of the human past in Egypt, Assyria, and the other countries of the near East. *The Story of Louis Pasteur* and *The Human Adventure* are the two greatest educational films which have ever been produced and each stands as a type with its own standards of excellence.

It is obvious, therefore, that the motion picture is a powerful instrument and that it may be used by the unscrupulous self-seeker as well as by the social scientist whose only desire is to develop substantial citizenship and ultimately to solve social problems.

The use of the motion picture as an instrument of education in the social science fields raises the question as to whether there is a difference between propaganda in the movies and education for social efficiency. The answer to this question depends entirely upon one's point of view. What would be considered wholesome education by some persons undoubtedly would be thought of as dangerous propaganda by others. Perhaps there is no line of demarcation between propaganda and education, but if we wish to make a distinction may it not be that propaganda is that type of education through which selfish interests attempt to put across some particular idea or program without the public being fully aware of its implications. Legitimate education in the social science field means thorough and impartial understanding of social issues grounded in clear comprehension of social structures and social processes. There are undoubtedly difficulties in the way of effective social science teaching whether the motion picture is used or not, particularly in the handling of controversial issues. Some of these difficulties are well illustrated in the problems which *The March of Time* has had to face in handling questions which are debatable and in which strongly biased attitudes may be involved. There may be some criticism as to the way in which these problems have been met; yet on the whole



it cannot be doubted but that the *March of Time* has achieved an admirable handling of current events and one which has great value in social science teaching.

Progress in the development of films for social science teaching has been very slow. Yet some things have been done more or less fortuitously both in shorts and feature length films which, if properly used by skillful teachers, have real educational value in this field. Such films as *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*, the MGM crime shorts, *The Road to Life*, *The Mayor of Hell*, *Wild Boys of the Road*, *Are These Our Children?* and a number of others have real significance in the field of criminology. The American social hygiene film, *Damaged Lives*, represents a good beginning in the public health field. The animated peace film *Why?*, the documentary film, *The First World War*, *All Quiet on the Western*

*Front*, *Hell on Earth*, and others may be used effectively in discussing the problems of war and peace. And there are many others that have social implications worthy of discussion.

But these films only give us the faintest notion of the tremendous new field in the social sciences which can be opened up both within and without the school. The important social science scenarios are yet to be written. The important social science films are yet to be made. Those which are successful and effective either in single features or in separate films will present the clear exposition of the principles of social science and will stimulate the development of emotional drives and social attitudes which will create good citizenship, reinforce our democratic social fabric, and promote social progress.

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## Problems of Developing Visual Education in a School System

By DR. CLAUDE HARDY

*Dr. Hardy is Superintendent of the White Plains, N. Y., Schools. He is Director of the New York Section of the National Education Association and editor of the Chapters on School and Home of the 1936 N.E.A. Year Book.*

MANY problems confront the school administrator when he considers the question of developing a visual education program for his school system. The first problem, of course, is that of cost. Appropriations for any kind of educational service must be examined carefully in order to safeguard the interests of the taxpayer. This is especially true when requests for funds are being made for services that are comparatively new or recent. Visual instruction itself is not new, but motion pictures represent relatively a new phase of visual education and I shall limit myself to that side of the question.

I assume it is not necessary to discuss the educational value of motion pictures, both silent and sound. It is taken for granted that they do have great educational value, and those of us who are concerned with the

expenditure of money for their use need to be interested in the problem of getting a maximum return on the investment. As a school superintendent responsible for the development of a suitable program of visual education by means of motion pictures at a reasonable cost, I need first of all to set up some criteria to judge the value of the films which I am willing to approve for purchase or for rental. I am presenting therefore, some criteria that I personally feel are necessary.

In the first place, it is evident that the primary purpose of the classroom film is not merely to entertain pupils but to instruct. The typical motion pictures shown in our theatres are more or less planned not to make people think, but to make them feel. Their chief purpose is entertainment. The appeal is made rather definitely to the emotions and, perhaps, incidentally, if at all, to reason. There are, however, certain motion pictures shown in public theatres that are very illuminating and instructive, and influence reflective thinking. The news reels,

the travel sketches, the pictures that deal with historical events and personalities, and the like, are unquestionably educative, and the great commercial film producers of the country are to be commended for what they have accomplished along this line. Moreover, anything that is said here in comparing the place and function of classroom films with the place and function of theatrical motion pictures is not intended as a criticism of the commercial movies. The comparison is made for one purpose only, viz., to stress the point that emphasis should always be placed first upon the instructional value of a film that is to be used in classrooms. The chief purpose of the classroom film should be to present to the pupils interesting factual material dealing with the world about them in such a way as to stimulate thought.

A second criterion which may be used in judging the value of specific classroom films is that their chief function is the portrayal of objects, or events, whose essential meaning is best understood when they are seen in motion. It is important to stress this point, since many subjects may be well taught without using pictorial devices at all. There are situations where words may be substituted for a motion picture. Ardent advocates of motion pictures often overlook this fact. Some modern enthusiasts would have everything taught by motion pictures, not realizing that such an arrangement in many instances would mean a foolish waste of both time and money.

It should also be pointed out that in many cases still pictures convey to pupils the same meanings just as effectively as, or even more so than motion pictures. The fundamental qualities of still and motion pictures should be considered when determining which would be preferable in a given situation. A still picture is static and it portrays products or results, whereas a motion picture is dynamic, and indicates change, development, processes, motion, or action. A still picture can not portray action; it can only suggest it. A motion picture alone portrays action and if action is needed to facilitate learning, then it is preferable to any other teaching device. For this reason, a moving picture of a subject in geography, such as the making of automobiles, the var-

ious processes involved in making refined sugar from the raw material, and the like, would be more desirable naturally than still pictures of the same subjects, since certain changes take place that involve action.

A third criterion that may be applied in appraising the appropriateness of classroom films is that whatever action material is shown should be, relatively, unfamiliar or new to the pupils and of such a nature that it can not be taught best by first hand contact with the object or event under consideration. This criterion is often violated. For instance, certain teachers in some city school systems have gone to considerable trouble to secure motion pictures of typical farm activities when they could have taken their groups to a farm nearby to see the real situation with much more satisfactory results. Again in such instances it is possible that most of the pupils are already familiar with farm life. Other illustrations could be given to show how this criterion is violated. At the same time it should be pointed out that there are circumstances under which the viewing of a motion picture would be more instructive than an excursion for first hand observation. In the first place, it would be more economical in time. Besides it is to be assumed that the writer of the film scenario has made a careful study of a particular industry and included only those essential details necessary to understand it. Pupils are often bewildered by the vast amount of details that come to their attention in passing through a factory and fail to note the most important facts. Then too, there are usually numerous distractions when excursions are made for first hand information, whereas pupils usually see motion pictures under better conditions of attention. Another advantage in using the film is that the teacher is able to make comments about significant facts portrayed in the picture while it is being shown. Besides, animated drawings depicting certain situations can be inserted into moving picture films making it possible for pupils to learn facts that might be missed altogether by first hand observation. For purposes of intimate study of details, a film may be reduced in speed or stopped entirely at certain points, which is still another advantage.



A fourth criterion that merits consideration in connection with evaluation of classroom films is that provision should be made for individual differences by grading the material to be taught as to length, nature and difficulty. To date this side of the motion picture development has been practically overlooked. That there are differences in individual pupils as to the way they react to motion pictures can not be denied. Some pupils, especially older ones, are able to sit still and observe a picture for a longer time than others, particularly younger children who are unable to follow even the most interesting picture story beyond a certain time limit. It should be pointed out also that young children need to be taught on the basis of direct, concrete experience, whereas the older pupils are better able, usually, to grasp meaning and relationships indirectly and to make generalizations. To show the same pictures, therefore, to all pupils regardless of age, may be said to be a questionable procedure.

The significance of this phase of motion pictures, as far as classroom use is concerned, should be taken under consideration by film producers. It so happens that the exigencies of the present situation have brought about standard films of 400 feet which take about sixteen minutes to show on the screen. Educationally, it would be unfortunate if all films should be definitely standardized at that length. There is need for shorter films and, no doubt, the future development of picture films will provide for this need. There is no valid reason why certain pictures could not be produced on 50 feet of film requiring about two or three minutes to show. Longer films, moreover, even the standard ones, could easily be broken up into three, four, or five units, each complete in itself.

A fifth criterion is the requirement that there be skillful use of titles in all classroom films. This is more important than one realizes at first thought. A summary of some of the common mistakes made in scenario writing of teaching films will, perhaps, make clear this point. To begin with, titles sometimes are used too frequently with the result that the finished picture is uninteresting and gives the impression of

being just a screen essay. A second common error is the use of too many words in titles. Only enough words to convey the desired meaning should be used. In the third place, there is a lack of proper titles in some films. This is probably due to the fact that the film editor, because of his familiarity with the subject, has taken too much for granted and failed to realize the difficulty the average spectator would have in understanding the picture the first time he saw it. A fourth common mistake is in using words, or language, that certain children do not understand. All titles should be written in the clearest and simplest manner possible.

Similarly, the general organization of the film used should be such that the story is told in a simple, unified, and coherent manner. This involves sequence. There are various ways of securing sequence, the most common of which is chronological sequence. The daily life of a typical coal miner in Pennsylvania is shown from the time he gets up until he goes to bed again. Going gradually from the well-known, or familiar, to the unknown or unfamiliar is another way of building up sequence. A third and very common type of sequence is that of development. The various stages in the making of sugar, for example, are shown step by step from the planting of sugar cane to the finished product. Behind every result there is usually a cause, and so a fourth type of sequence is causal. In a film dealing with health problems the connection is shown between unsanitary conditions, for instance, and subsequent disease.

All moving pictures used in classrooms, like text-books and other instructional material, should, of course, be authentic and up-to-date. This is a criterion that may be, and frequently is, violated. It is essential that those responsible for selection of school films use extreme care in their choices, to the end that whatever is shown will be bona-fide, real, accurate and representative of true situations.

Another criterion is rather obvious. All moving pictures used in classrooms should conform to accepted standards of photography. While it is important to have due regard for artistic effects, it is at the

same time essential that all objects be sharply defined to guard against eye-strain. Most scenes should be taken as close to action as possible, a good close-up, as it were, since it is assumed that the real purpose of educational motion pictures is to show pupils what things or persons actually look like and how they function or behave. Then, there is the matter of acting of characters in a picture. Everything should be as natural as possible. In educational pictures one has a right to judge acting by the same standards as one would judge a play or a theatrical movie. The real test is, "was the acting well and effectively done?" Some pictures are undesirable from the point of view of photography because they flicker and are unsteady. This is accounted for, sometimes, by the fact that the camera is not securely placed when the picture is being taken. There are other significant points to be considered from the point of view of photography, such as balanced grouping of objects, focusing attention upon the central idea, careful planning and skillful rendering of animated drawings, etc., but this much indicates how important movie photography itself is.

Various criteria for judging the value of classroom films, as generally accepted in the educational world, having been presented. It will suffice now, perhaps, to complete the discussion of moving pictures for school use by referring briefly to a few additional points.

In the first place, it should be pointed out that motion pictures serve their best purpose for instructional use in separate classrooms, or in comparatively small groups, rather than in auditoriums or other assembly rooms where large groups are brought together. There are times, of course, when the showing of a certain type of picture to an entire school or department, would be profitable and worth while, but generally speaking "mass instruction" is not desirable and the educational result is likely to be much better where the number of pupils witnessing a picture is limited.

There are limitations to the satisfactory use of motion pictures even under the most favorable circumstances. From certain experiments carried on during the past thirty

years, we know much about the silent-reading processes. What an individual on the average does, physically and psychically, to acquire meaning from the printed page has been rather accurately determined and interpreted thoroughly in terms of method. Is it possible that the "reading" of motion pictures would show parallel results? The trends in experimentation along this line indicate that the powers of observation and of retention of pupils vary considerably. From fifty to sixty per cent of a motion picture is about all that an individual normally will get. Many details will pass unnoticed or will be inaccurately observed. One showing of a film to prepared or unprepared students can not be relied upon to accomplish full educational possibilities, and it should be pointed out that intensive preparation of pupils prior to the showing of a picture is highly desirable since results are usually better. The inference from experiments already made would indicate that one can not entirely trust the eyes of school children to see comprehendingly what is presented in terms of visual stimuli. The situation, therefore, seems to be parallel to that which occurs in a silent-reading class, when, in spite of the identity of textual content before the eyes of each member of the class, individuals in the groups will show special selection of ideas, unusual emphases, obvious misunderstandings of content, and other peculiar impressions and interpretations.

So far I have dealt with my topic from the point of view of silent pictures only. The criteria, for the most part, I believe would apply equally to sound pictures. Now a word or two about sound films themselves. Personally I do not think sound pictures should supplant silent pictures for there is a distinct need for both kinds. Besides, we have yet to discover how valuable sound is in visual instruction. How dependable is the ear in the learning process? Sound itself is relatively unimportant and has significance only as a supplement to sight. According to certain experiments, there are both advantages and disadvantages in sound pictures over silent pictures.\* Unless sound

\* See "Sound Pictures in Education"—New York State Education, June, 1933.



is a vital part of the pictures there is no advantage. In fact, it would appear that there is a disadvantage of sound pictures over silent films. In maintaining and sustaining interest, where sound is a vital part of the picture, sound films have only a slight advantage over silent films.

There are other problems that the school administrator faces in trying to build up in his school system a satisfactory visual education program, but time will not permit my going into them. There is one serious problem, however, that might be mentioned briefly, and that is the propriety of co-oper-

ating with local motion picture theatres when a picture of special merit is to be shown in the community. Should the schools refuse to use advance material—such as motion picture manuals, guides to appreciation, study, etc.—that is furnished by the industry itself, on the ground that the practice is a subtle form of advertising and therefore open to criticism? I do not know. This is a problem that we school superintendents are unable to solve satisfactorily. We would welcome some sort of a formula by which we could act with safety and wisdom.

## Making and Using Scientific Motion Pictures

By DR. RAYMOND L. DITMARS

*Dr. Ditmars is a member of the Executive Committee of the National Board, as Curator of Mammals and Reptiles of the New York Zoological Park he has brought his knowledge of these to many through his motion pictures. He has prepared a series of forty-two reels called "Living Natural History."*

MY work with motion pictures started about twenty years ago with an idea. I had been in the Zoological Park then a number of years, had observed various manifestations among the animals and had been in the tropics and traveling pretty well around the map, escorting some animals back, and I decided that I would prepare a lecture on animals. So as illustrations I had made up a number of lantern slides, glass slides, and with a lantern slide you have to keep an eye on it because if you leave it in too long while you are talking it cracks and the effect is very disturbing on the screen. There is no danger from fire or anything of that kind but the slide simply will not endure the heat beyond a certain time.

I had been talking rapidly about a certain type of animal, a very remarkable type, in order to tell my story quickly while that slide remained on the screen for about three minutes' time. And possibly I forgot. The slide didn't crack but I had to look around to see what was happening to it and there was the face of this creature absolutely immobile, lifeless, staring out into the audience after all of these enthusiastic remarks about

strange habits. I felt that that audience possibly was "from Missouri" about this wonderful story I had been telling and right there the idea came into my mind, even while the lecture went on, that I must prove these points with motion pictures.

It was very soon after we started on the design of a studio. I decided to have that studio right on my home plot in Westchester County, N. Y., because I knew that going into cinematographic research as with other phases of scientific work you are likely to be enthusiastic and the hours will be late at night—and there was a bed one hundred yards away. So the studio was built there, a building about 75 feet long. It has a great part of the apparatus of the modern dramatic studio—power lines running into it, a big switch-board, different types of lights.

A great deal of the more interesting type of work has been done with the smaller animals, some not larger than a mouse, and also in bringing out life histories of insects, spiders and the like. Of course a great deal of work was done outside. I had designed in England a very light camera but carrying a comparatively large amount of film for work in the field. I remember one late summer being devoted to different types of spider-webs and designing a type of mirror to illuminate the structure of the web. And then when the eggs were laid, because the spider dies with the fall, that is the

female, the eggs remaining over winter, picking up the story again as the little spiders hatched, and also noting their growth, shedding of skin and changes of color.

This indicates the possibilities of education with motion pictures. I have used many of these with lectures. The collections have built up in the vaults at Scarsdale, N. Y., to about 250,000 feet of negative.

In the Zoological Park we have one of the finest collections of mammals, birds and reptiles in the world. The cages are carefully designed. We are slowly but constantly modernizing. The labels are of the instructive type. We have maps and charts. Classes of school children come to the park and there are little talks and lectures. We have a research laboratory and a great deal of field work is accomplished. But there is limitation in a zoo. Our type of zoo is like a museum with living specimens. There is limitation because a great many of the animals are sleeping during the day. And then with others, while the visitor can note the handsome forms and coloration and the like, he fails to see certain manifestations which can be awaited by the cinematographer. And again I say it is the smaller forms that are of more interest. The public knows a lion, a tiger and an elephant but it doesn't know the night-moving animals, the strange habits of the galago, when it trails at night or the nocturnal monkeys.

Here we see what is possible with the camera—for instance with poisonous snakes. I have brought out a great many manifestations of poisonous snakes that the public will never see in a zoological park because it would be dangerous to stir up the reptiles in their cages. But in the studio, with a specially designed case for photographing, we have cautiously and patiently induced these manifestations and recorded them, much to the excitement at one time of my electrician Andy, who is now a master electrician in one of the finest theatres in the land. I remember in the old days Andy detested snakes. One time I was photographing a large Egyptian cobra and the stage was sanded and sloping in order to get a better focal effect from the camera and the snake struck and slid on the floor. Andy had four heavy, flaming arcs going at the

time. I detected a moment after, the odor of something burning. Those arcs were carrying heavy amperage, about fifty amperes, and I thought that something had gone wrong and one of the resistors or a cable was over-heated. It means a bad flash of fireworks when anything with such passage of electricity gives way. So I was getting the cobra teased around cautiously toward his fiber carrying case. The motor driven camera recorded the scene. My idea was to lift him up slowly to balance on a stick, while he was looking at me ready to strike, and get him into the case, touch him on the tail, shut the case and that was all there was to it.

I said, "Andy, while I am getting this fellow back in the box you look along those cables. I smell something burning." No answer. Finally I got the snake into the receptacle, gave the hook a turn and the case flew shut. I looked around and said, "Where is it?" No answer.

Way down at the end of the studio—those were the days when we were troubled a bit with static—was an old fashioned stove with an immense circumference very much like the old stoves in Maine railroad stations, and on top of that a big copper receptacle. The idea was to produce moisture in the studio because at times you would get static marks on the film. We even took precautions of grounding the cameras with a chain. Andy was inside the stove drum which was a sheathing on the outside to save the stove heating up the wall. He decided to get inside and burn along with the stove rather than stay outside with the cobra. The odor was Andy's clothing just on the verge of bursting into flame.

In the way I have described, many proofs of strange things may be brought out. I remember one picture that was made—the life of the beaver. That picture forms only a reel yet it ran through four or five years in the making; getting scenes here and there with telephoto lens and the like, but finally the records were boiled down to about nine hundred feet. Another picture shows how all members of the deer family shed the antlers every year and grow a new pair. When the antlers really start to grow, they are growing at the rate of one inch a day. Then



the blood flow is shut off and the antlers harden and turn into bone and the deer is savage. While the antlers are growing the deer is as meek as a rabbit. That series of scenes was started at a fence in October, carried through a full year and ended at that same fence, in the same spot, in October of the succeeding year.

Thus you can bring out many things. Our friend Mr. George Bernard Shaw, recently made the remark that elephants and monkeys were particularly fine types of animals because they were vegetarians. I could show

Mr. Shaw that a number of species of monkeys are carnivorous. That would be interesting in teaching a gentleman natural history, who possibly happened to pick the wrong book.

Speaking of books, there has been objection in the past in the schools to too broad a use, too radical an introduction of systematic motion picture films on the ground that they may decrease interest in books. There should be no such interference. The modernized, scientifically arranged motion picture will increase respect for good books.

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## Educational Audio Film Production

By DR. V. C. ARNSPIGER

*Dr. Arnspiger is Director of Research for Erpi Picture Consultants, Inc. He is the author of books, articles and pamphlets in the field of visual education.*

THERE are certain fundamental differences between the theatrical film and the educational film. The purpose of the entertainment film is to divert, to amuse, and to arouse an emotional reaction. The educational film must present a learning experience that is difficult to obtain in any other way. It must challenge adventure into broad areas of unexplored territory. It must present an educational concept, an educational experience which is often abstract and involved.

The main outcome of the entertainment picture is of an emotional and transitory nature; the outcome of the educational film experience is intellectual and contributes significantly to permanent learning if the picture has been properly produced and is properly utilized. The educational picture is not so much concerned with establishing a mood or maintaining a highly dramatic rhythm, it must present a problem in a clear and objective manner, comprehensively and with the optimum attention to detail. The setting for the educational film is not necessarily furnished within the film itself. The teacher using the film as an integral part of larger study activity, sets the stage by directing classroom activities that lead up to the introduction of the film. This type of talking

picture should be so constructed that several showings under proper conditions may be advisable in order to furnish that amount of repetition conducive to best learning.

What excuse do we have for developing educational films for classroom use? Why not put the same material into book form? Why not have it presented by the teacher or developed in group discussion? The main contribution of the instructional film is to overcome limitations to learning which exist in the ordinary situation.

What are some of these limitations to learning? I shall recount some of them briefly. Situations are some times so intermingled with or surrounded by environmental conditions that their meaning is obscured. The necessity for rapid assimilation of great masses of data constitutes a common limitation to learning. Situations are frequently so completely separated in space and in time as to make their true relationships obscure. Vocabulary difficulties constitute another serious limitation to learning.

We have reached a very high learning level in the natural sciences largely because of the possibility of utilizing laboratory techniques, reproducing situations in front of the class or through the microscope. In the social studies, however, we have many blind spots because we have not been able, by means of the printed word, to demonstrate the life situations involved by any method which corresponds to the laboratory

technique. Now if by means of film we can reproduce life situations in the classroom in meaningful relationships, we are going to remove these blind spots from the social area and reconstruct our whole program of the social studies.

An important phase in the making of an educational talking picture may be called pre-production work. All of you have seen the so-called educational films which came as a result of "spraying the landscape"—a little of this and that, some of this and a little of that other. Any picture that deserves to be called educational must be planned very carefully. It must be based upon research, investigation and study and effective thinking on the part of a great number of individuals. This involves extended conferences between persons responsible for the philosophy of education, for methods of teaching, for cinema techniques and, of course, the subject matter specialist. Each film must be a part of a larger program or a unit of instruction.

Careful study must be made of the elements of subject matter in order to determine which elements should be presented by the film, eliminating those more suited for reading or group discussion, lecture, field trip or laboratory. The function of the picture is to make clear these more intangible concepts and their proper relation to the remaining subject matter.

Cinema techniques and devices form the bricks and mortar out of which the educational film is made. These include natural photography, intrinsic sound, "dubbed" speech and sound, time lapse photography, slow motion, microphotography, trick photography, double exposure, animated drawing and models. The effectiveness of the film depends largely upon the mastery with which these elements are tied together, and the contribution of montage in both its broadest and narrowest meanings. Montage techniques are varied and extremely effective. One of these is contrast and comparison—progress in transportation shown strikingly by a rapid sequence involving an old river boat, an ocean liner and a multi-motor plane. Another is analysis, depicting only the significant part which gives meaning to a total situation—strike violence made more

meaningful by close-ups of the impact of a club on the head of a striker and a huddled, fallen form, rather than by general shots of mob action. Concentration is attained by use of attention-directing devices where necessary, or by bringing the scene from long shot to close-up. The reverse of this—orientation by enlargement—involves starting with an extreme close-up and then following with an orientation shot from a greater distance. Symbolic interpolation, recurrence, parallelism, prediction and mastery are a few other available montage devices.

The most important element in educational talking picture production is the integration of sound and scene—audio and visual elements. It means not only technical synchronization but a bringing together of sound and scene so that each contributes the maximum to the other.

The direction of educational talking picture production demands not only mastery of cinema techniques and the subject matter of the film, but of all related subject matter far beyond the attainment of any one individual. It means that the subject matter specialist must be constantly with the film as it grows and develops. The script for an educational picture cannot be completed in advance of actual production. It cannot be changed by the director alone, nor by the subject matter specialist alone, but there must continue to be constant interplay among the various specialists involved until the picture is completed.

After the picture has been finally produced, there remains the matter of utilization and testing. The one final test of any educational picture is in actual classroom use and until you can get pictures that are produced with all this research background, until you know the subject matter is authentic, that the best use is made of all the above mentioned cinema devices and techniques; until educational psychology and philosophy function satisfactorily through the film; until we have developed such a picture and tested it in the actual classroom situation, it may be either good or bad, no matter how excellent it may appear to be.

How about the outlook for future educa-

*(Continued on page 18)*



# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS

## DEPARTMENT

This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of *Exceptional and Honorable*

*Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.*

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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## The Story of Louis Pasteur

*Written by Sheridan Gibney and Pierre Collings; directed by William Dieterle; photographed by Tony Gaudio; produced and distributed by Warner-First National.*

### The cast

Louis Pasteur .....	Paul Muni
Marie Pasteur .....	Josephine Hutchinson
Annette Pasteur .....	Anita Louise
Dr. Jean Martel .....	Donald Woods
Dr. Charbonnet .....	Fritz Leiber
Dr. Emile Roux .....	Henry O'Neil
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Joseph Meister .....	Dickie Moore
Mrs. Meister .....	Ruth Robinson
Emperor Napoleon III .....	Walter Kingsford
Empress Eugenie .....	Iphigenie Castiglioni
President Thiers .....	Herbert Corthell

PLENTY of historical figures have been dramatized for the screen, invariably men or women whose lives abounded either in romance or the glamour of great events. *Arrowsmith* presented the struggles of the scientist fighting against the conservatism of current prejudices and ignorance to bring the benefit of new discoveries to his fellow-men. *The Story of Louis Pasteur* is the pioneer, in America, in taking a scientist who really lived and making him the hero of a battle for progress. The remarkable thing about it is how convincingly it proves that there is absorbing drama in things the movies have always shied away from.

Here is a chemist, hunting for germs—things which in his day all medical science, in its academic strongholds, denied the very existence of. No Martin John-

sons or Frank Bucks, or even Carl Akeley, ever embarked on a trail more exciting or important than Louis Pasteur followed right in his own laboratory—if only a writer and director could contrive to transfer that excitement to the screen; and no conqueror, returning from great battles, ever had a triumph more significant for mankind than the ultimate recognition of Pasteur's work by the scientific world.

To have taken a life story of this kind, so far removed from the romantic tangles and physical activities of the usual popular entertainment, and made it vivid, engrossing and thrilling, for the mass audience, is a step that may lead the motion picture along a path some of its best friends have long wished to see it tread. It proves that vital subjects, hitherto avoided, do not have to be dull, that they can be as exciting as the most enthralling fiction, and leave, when the show is over, new knowledge in the minds of their audiences.

I suspect that the writers of the scenario have used some dramatic license in the picturing of Pasteur's character and struggles, giving them a lift and tension that a sober recital of historic fact would not have made so apparent. But I am sure that the result of their work is as essentially true as it is effective, a fine portrait of a humane man and a great scientist, one of the supreme benefactors of mankind.

The story, with a fine flow of picturesque detail that re-creates the times and circumstances in which Pasteur worked, presents first his triumphant cure of the anthrax scourge, which helped the French peasants to pay the war indemnity to Prussia in



*Paul Muni and Fritz Leiber in "The Story of Louis Pasteur"*

such an incredibly short time; then his first application of his hydrophobia serum to human beings, at the risk of his reputation and even his life; finally the crowning of his work by the acclaim of all Europe, a stirring climax with something like the echoes of trumpets ringing in the spirit of it.

Clever hands have devised a script for this with a steadily rising interest, sharp conflicts contrasted with periods of pastoral or domestic calm, humor, pathos, and a series of climaxes building to the triumphant end. Some of the actors seem like mere actors, but the situations, and the director's handling of them, keep a sense of life always moving in it, which is what brings those days of France in the Third Empire and First Republic close enough to be real and understandable, and the people within our sympathy. Beards and all, Paul Muni and the other men have an actuality that gives them warmth and substance, and the humanness that makes the importance

of what they are doing not just something of a hundred years ago but an immediate concern of now and always. Romance and adventure are more or less individual matters—the strife of knowledge against ignorance, light against darkness, is the concern of the whole race.

It would be a pity to label this film educational and uplifting if that were to suggest to anyone that it is solemn and dull. It is far from that—it is as tender as a love story and as exciting as a gangster picture.

J. S. H.

(Continued from page 2)

a school for poor children in Paris this film, in French with English subtitles, is a remarkable and moving picture of child psychology. Simple in plot but rich in human interests. Metropolis.

fj MILKY WAY, THE—Harold Lloyd, Adolphe Menjou. Play by Lyman Root. Directed by Leo McCarey. The story of a shy and timid milkman who becomes involved with a champion prize-fighter and his manager. Plenty of amusing situations. Paramount.

(Continued on page 19)



## Two Films from Plays

### Ceiling Zero

*Stage and screen play by Frank Wead; directed by Howard Hawks; photographed by Arthur Edson; produced and distributed by Warner-First National.*

#### The cast

Dizzy Davis .....	James Cagney
Jake Lee .....	Pat O'Brien
Tommy Thomas .....	June Travis
Texas Clarke .....	Stuart Erwin
Al Stone .....	Barton MacLane
Tay .....	Henry Wadsworth
Mary Lee .....	Martha Tippetts
Lou Clarke .....	Isabel Jewel
Joe Allen .....	Craig Reynolds
Smiley .....	Richard Purcell
Eddie Payson .....	Carlyle Moore, Jr.
Fred .....	Addison Richards
Mike Owens .....	Garry Owen
Doc Wilson .....	Edward Gargan
Les Bogan .....	Robert Light
Buzz .....	James Bush
Baldy .....	Pat West

### The Petrified Forest

*Screen play by Charles Kenyon and Delmer Davis; from the play by Robert E. Sherwood; directed by Archie L. Mayo; photographed by Sol Polito; produced and distributed by Warner Bros.*

#### The cast

Alan Squier .....	Leslie Howard
Gabrielle Maple .....	Bette Davis
Mrs. Chisholm .....	Genevieve Tobin
Boze Hertzlinger .....	Dick Foran
Duke Mantee .....	Humphrey Bogart
Jackie .....	Joseph Sawyer
Gramp Maple .....	Charles Grapewin
Mr. Chisholm .....	Paul Harvey
Lineman .....	Eddie Acuff
Ruby .....	Adrian Morris
Paula .....	Nina Campana
Slim .....	Slim Thompson
Joseph .....	John Alexander

**T**he question is always coming up among people who like to discuss it critically: just when is this thing, photographed by a moving picture camera and projected on a screen, a real motion picture? Completely a form in itself, not a series of pictures in motion that merely illustrate a novel, for instance, or photographs that present what is practically only the action and talk of a play on a stage.

It all adds up to asking, what *is* motion picture, as one might ask what is poetry, what is theatre, what is music. Some people ask what is cinema. And as comprehensive

an answer as any, if you consider all the answer's ramifications, is to say that it is something expressed by images and sounds mechanically reproduced and represented progressively on a screen that could not be so effectively expressed by any other means. Something that is in itself a creation, not just a copy, an accurate reproduction, a supplement. Whatever it is that lives in a great symphony cannot be put into words or visual images, though words and images may try to describe and interpret it. The magic of poetry, the sound and rhythm of words with their emotional evocations, cannot be put into moving pictures with precisely the same effect. The long narrative of a man's life, with all the subtle searchings into character and causes which a novelist can pursue, may be suggested in a movie, it may even be sketched in a fashion that is very pleasing and satisfying, but the complete forces of its length and detail remain between the covers of a book, impossible to project upon a movie screen.

A play, for obvious reasons, is the nearest thing to a movie, and one of the most reiterated criticisms of many movies is that they are nothing but photographed plays.

*Ceiling Zero* and *The Petrified Forest* were plays, and those who saw them on the stage cannot help comparisons when they see the films made from them. Such comparisons are all the more inevitable because the films make little changes in the characters and plots, sticking with remarkable closeness to the material with which the playwright originally worked. Only the people who can make such comparisons can tell which was the most effective, the play or the film. But there is something to be said for the films without so much reference to their sources as to a kind of development in film making which may have been helped by a certain amount of derivation from the stage, but which is a perfectly legitimate development of cinema.

*Ceiling Zero* is about aviators, and incidentally, of course, about aviation. So far as it is concerned with aviation it has a certain importance as an historical picture, depicting that intermediate phase in flying between the old romantic type of dare-devil heroism created by the war and the new,

commercialized, scientific, safety-first conditions that are making aviation an everyday means of modern traffic and communication. So far as it concerns individual flyers, with their personal interactions of drama, it is a picture of a vanishing type—men who went through the war together, with all the special loyalties of friendship fostered by their reckless comradeship in daring death together and in the wild carouses that were the interludes between dangers. All they had learned to live for ended when reckless courage in the air, and care-free irresponsibility on the ground, had to give way to caution, careful planning, cool-headed technical mastery. *Ceiling Zero* shows three men, different but all bound closely by old ties, and what they did when it came inescapably home to them that their old lives were finished.

*The Petrified Forest* is also about men, two of them—one a man of imagination and brains and no vital energy for action or creation, the other a creature of mere feeling and undirected impulses, a lawless desperado. One is over-civilized, one undercivilized—one a cynical on-looker at life, the other a murderer. At a lonely gas-station in the American desert they come to a melodramatic ending of their lives, both negative, both failures. But the over-civilized one dies with a certain purpose—that by dying he can help someone else (the girl), with more vitality than he had ever had, to do something more with life than he had managed to do.

The action of both these pictures is concentrated in one place, which gives them an inevitable resemblance to stage plays. Life presses in from all around, determining what is thought and felt and done, but it is a pressure that we need only to understand—we do not need to see it. If in *Ceiling Zero* we know that a man in a plane is lost in the fog, that knowledge is enough: there is no need for following him endlessly with a camera when the whole importance of his being lost is its effect on the people waiting helplessly below. That effect comes vividly enough through brief glimpses of the man in the plane and even more vividly from the quick flashes of radio communication that connect him with the ground. And in *The*

*Petrified Forest*, once the waste of desert and the illimitable starry skies have been suggested, there is no need for repeated proofs that the gas station is an isolated place, any more than there is need to see all the desperate deeds the killer has done when the mere sight and sound of the man sum up in one revealing instant just what kind of a man he is.

In brief, both these pictures get away from the old idea that in a motion picture you must *see* everything (it being a picture), and use instead whatever brief means of sound or word or symbol will speed on the action best.

Aside from these aids to concentration that seem to belong to the stage play's technique, both these films, within their limits of setting, move with a fluid life that only the mobile camera, and the art of putting bits of scenes together, the motion picture way, can achieve. So why not call them movies, real movies, and good ones at that?—J.S.H.

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(Continued from page 14)

tional films? Indications are that they will find wide use in group instruction, particularly in large groups. Their use in adult education is yet virtually unexplored. Both the talking picture and the radio have great potentialities as yet hardly dreamed of in this field. The talking picture will be used as an instrument of research; for example, in the measurement of intelligence areas. Had it occurred to you that practically all our present intelligence tests are really reading tests. There are certain areas of intelligence which reading will not measure and the whole visual and auditory areas of intelligence are opened up for testing by the talking picture. We are going to be concerned more and more with the expansion of the curriculum than with any other aspect of education. From these expansions of curricula we are looking for an enlightened democratic group in the future. It is in the talking picture and other mechanical devices, I believe, that we must rest our hope of attaining in certain of these areas, the goals upon which our civilization depends.



(Continued from page 16)

m MURDER OF DR. HARRIGAN, THE—Ricardo Cortez, Kay Linaker, Mary Astor. Novel by Mignon G. Eberhart. Directed by Frank McDonald. A brisk and exciting detective story, all the action laid in a hospital. The interest centers more on how the crime was committed than on who committed it, but it has a gripping interest, sufficiently relieved by humor. First National.

m NEXT TIME WE LOVE—Margaret Sullivan, James Stewart. Novel "Say Good-bye Again" by Ursula Parrott. Directed by Edward H. Griffith. Story of a great love—a newspaperman and his actress wife follow their own careers, bringing them both disappointments and triumphs. Well acted by the entire cast. Universal.

m \*PETRIFIED FOREST, THE—See Exceptional Photoplays Department, page 17.

f PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER—Victor McLaglen, Freddie Bartholomew. Story by Damon Runyon. Directed by Tay Garnett. The story of a boy king in the Balkan region who had heard of American gangsters and wanted to be kidnapped, and a tough Marine hired to kidnap him. Fantastic in plot but novel. 20th Century-Fox.

f \*ROSE MARIE—Jeannette MacDonald, Nelson Eddy. Operetta by Otto Harbach and Oscar Hammerstein II, and music by Rudolph Friml. Directed by W. S. Van Dyke. The famous musical romantic melodrama, with its familiar tunes, about the singer and the mountie, put on the screen most skillfully, with all the elements of popular appeal. It has dramatic interest, some natural comedy, good singing and lovely scenery, and is of course excellently directed. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

j SILVERSPURS—Buck Jones. Screen story by Charles Selzer. Directed by Ray Taylor. A story of the West and a bandit called "Silver Spurs" with cattle rustling and plenty of fighting. Universal.

fj \*STORY OF LOUIS PASTEUR, THE—See Exceptional Photoplays Department, page 15.

f STRIKE ME PINK—Eddie Cantor, Ethel Merman. Novel "Dreamland" by Clarence Buddington Kelland. Directed by Norman Taurog. Musical farce, about a timid man put in charge of an amusement park, and his struggle with racketeers. A hilarious chase at the end quickens up the film remarkably. United Artists.

f TOUGH GUY—Jackie Cooper, Joseph Calleia. Screen story by Florence Ryerson and Edgar Allan Wolf. Directed by Chester M. Franklin. The human side of a gangster brought out by a runaway boy and his dog. Exciting, with plenty of violent action, and some good characterizations. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f UNGKARLSPAPPAN (A Bachelor Father)—Swedish cast. Play by Edward Childs Car-

penter. Directed by Gustav Molander. An American play, about chickens coming home to roost, that is very amusing to those who understand Swedish. Scandinavian Talking Pictures.

f YOU MAY BE NEXT—Lloyd Nolan, Ann Sothorn. Screen story by Henry Wales and Ferdinand Feyder. Directed by Albert S. Rogell. A novel attempt at crime, hi-jacking the big radio broadcasting stations. Exciting melodrama, with a tepid love story mixed mildly into it. Columbia.

## SHORT SUBJECTS

### INFORMATIONALS

fj CREW RACING—Following a freshman crew through its training until they are fit for a big race. Excellent of its kind. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

fj DEEP SEA HARVEST—Diving for sponges. First Division.

fj FINER POINTS (Sportlight Series)—Care and training of pointers. Paramount.

f FISHERMAN'S LUCK—Big game fishing. Educational.

f GAME OF JAI-ALAI—Growth and present status of the famous Latin American game. Educational.

f HOSTDAGAR DAR HEMMA (Fall Days at Home)—Pleasant scenic. Scandinavian.

f MARCH OF TIME NO. 1 (Second Series)—The U. S.'s Pacific island air stations; the lonely Parisian executioner; the evacuation of the Tennessee River Valley for the Norris Dam. RKO-Radio.

f MOROCCO—Interesting travelogue. RKO-Radio.

f MOVIE MILESTONES NO. 2—Memorable scenes from some of the great silent motion pictures. Paramount.

f NATURE'S HANDIWORK—Beautiful natural scenery. Vitaphone.

f OLD OCCUPATIONS—Various industries on land and sea. Vitaphone.

f PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 7—"Pete" the dog of Our Gang comedies; song makers of the nation. Paramount.

fj PRIMITIVE PITCAIRN—How the descendants of the Bounty mutineers live communistically on the remote Pacific island where Fletcher Christian took refuge. Interesting. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f PATHE TOPICS NO. 3—Alaskan thoroughbreds; handwriting expert; visual music. RKO-Radio.

fj RURAL MEXICO (Fitzpatrick Traveltalk)—In color, interesting and picturesque as usual. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

fj SEEING EYE, THE—How dogs are trained in Morristown, N. J., to be guides for blind people. Educational.

f STEEL AND STONE—Excellent educational short about bridges and tunnels. Vitaphone.

f TIMBER GIANTS—Felling the redwood trees; excellent. Vitaphone.

fj WILD WINGS—An outstanding picture showing wild bird life and using the slow motion camera to excellent advantage. Vitaphone.

f WINTER MAGIC (Magic Carpet Series)—Lovely scenes, interlarded with bad verse and accompanied by unnecessary comment. 20th Century-Fox.

### CARTOONS

fj ALASKA SWEEPSTAKES (Oswald the Lucky Rabbit)—Oswald holds the winning ticket. Universal.

fj ALPINE ANTICS (Looney Tune)—Amusing cartoon about winter sports. Vitaphone.

fj BETTY BOOP AND THE LITTLE KING—The Little King bored with the opera joins Betty in her act. Paramount.

fj FLOWERS FOR MADAME (Merrie Melody)—In color. Vitaphone.

fj KANNIBAL KAPERS (Krazy Kat)—Krazy is cast away on an island where the cannibals are very modern. Columbia.

fj LITTLE DUTCH PLATE—In color. Vitaphone.

fj \*MICKEY'S POLO TEAM (Mickey Mouse)—A novel and most entertaining cartoon. United Artists.

fj NO OTHER ONE (Bouncing Ball)—Hal Kemp's orchestra playing. Paramount.

fj SOFT BALL GAME (Oswald the Lucky Rabbit)—Oswald's team scores in baseball. Universal.

fj SOMEWHERE IN DREAMLAND—Color cartoon in which two little poor children visit a wonderful dreamland and wake to find it partly true. Paramount.

## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures is a citizen body, organized in 1909 by the People's Institute of New York City as a medium for reflecting intelligent public opinion regarding a growing art and entertainment. This is still the Board's function, together with that of disseminating information on the subject of motion pictures and carrying on a constructive program having to do with community cooperation in the advancement and uses of the motion picture.

The National Board is opposed to legal censorship and is in favor of the community better films plan of placing emphasis upon and building support for the finer and more worthwhile films. It is at all times glad to cooperate with any agency to encourage and guide the motion picture in developing its possibilities both as recreation and as entertainment.

It carries on its work through various committees. All members of the committees serve without pay. No member is connected with the motion picture industry. They are representative of varied interests and activities and many are connected with large public welfare organizations or educational institutions.

The General Committee is a body evolved out of the original group organized in 1909. It is the appeal and central advisory committee of the National Board to which policies are referred and to which decisions of the Review Committee regarding pictures may be carried either by the producers or by the Review Committee itself.

The Executive Committee is composed of members of the General Committee and is the directing body of the National Board, charged with the formulation of policies, the election of members, the expenditure of funds and supervision of all administrative affairs.

The Review Committee is a large group of 300 members carrying on the work of reviewing the films. It is divided into sub-groups which meet for review per schedule during each week in the projection rooms of the various motion picture companies.

The Membership Committee supervises the membership list of the Review Committee and recommends the names of proposed new members for consideration by the Executive Committee.

The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays is composed of critics and students of the cinema interested particularly in encouraging the artistic development of the motion picture. It reviews and publishes a critique of the finest films and assists community groups in the showing of unusual films to special audiences. Its pioneer activity has done much to lay the foundation for the Little Photoplay Theatre movement and to stimulate the organization of subscription groups to develop audiences for the support of the creative achievements of the screen.

## NATIONAL MOTION PICTURE COUNCIL

The community or field work of the National Board of Review is conducted under its National Motion Picture Council, through affiliated membership groups, service contact groups and correspondents throughout the country. The National Council assists in the organization and program of work of local groups which are usually called Councils.

These Councils follow a plan initiated by the National Board in 1916 of having a membership composed of representatives from many organizations, cultural, educational, recreational, religious, and civic, so that they typify the original movement for community participation in the development and best use of the motion picture as recreation and education.

The objectives of such organizations are as follows:

To demonstrate through the education of public opinion, the effectiveness of selection and classification, instead of censorship, as a means of forwarding the development of the motion picture and its best uses.

To encourage through open meetings, forums, classes and other means, the study of the motion picture as a medium of entertainment, education and artistic expression.

To concentrate the attention of the public on specific worthwhile films through the publication of a Photoplay Guide to the selected pictures being currently shown at local theatres.

To arrange family Friday night or week-end programs of selected films, and junior matinees of pictures particularly suited to the tastes of children, through cooperation with local exhibitors.

To endorse and further the use of visual education through motion pictures in the schools.

To arrange and promote occasional exhibitions of exceptional and cultural films that would not normally be shown in the commercial theatres.

### PUBLICATIONS

The National Board of Review and its Council as an aid to the groups carrying out these objectives furnishes an informational service through its publications.

#### National Board of Review Magazine (monthly)

\$2.00 a year for individual subscriptions  
\$1.00 a year to Council or club groups

#### Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures

\$2.50 a year when taken alone, available at a special rate of \$1.00 in conjunction with the Magazine.

#### Selected Pictures Catalog (annual) .....25c

#### Special Film Lists .....10c ea.

Such as Selected Films for Children's Showings,  
Selected Book-Films, Educational Films, etc.

#### National Board of Review—Its Background, Growth and Present Status.....free

#### National Board of Review—How It Works.....free

#### A Plan and a Program for Community Motion Picture Councils .....free



# NATIONAL BOARD *of* REVIEW MAGAZINE

Vol. XI, No. 3



March, 1936



*Charlie Rehearsing for His Song in "Modern Times" (See page 11)*

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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

f BOULDER DAM—Ross Alexander, Patricia Ellis. Book by Dan M. Templin. Directed by Frank McDonald. How a young man, a cynic and a drifter, found out his own possibilities when he got a job on Boulder Dam and also a new slant on work and human nature. Brisk in action, racy in dialogue, and a sympathetic picture of certain types of laborers. Warner.

m \*DESIRE—Marlene Dietrich, Gary Cooper. Screen story by Hans Szekeley. Directed by Frank Borzage. A well directed and beautifully acted production. The story deals with a girl who is forced to steal a valuable pearl necklace and a bashful young American who pursues her all over Spain. Paramount.

f \*FOLLOW THE FLEET—Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers. Play "Shore Leave" by David Belasco. Directed by Mark Sandrich. Lively and romantic story of Uncle Sam's gobs and girls, with good music, excellent dancing and many amusing incidents. Musical numbers by Irving Berlin. RKO-Radio.

m GARDEN MURDER CASE, THE—Edmund Lowe, Virginia Bruce. Novel by S. S. Van Dine. Directed by Edward L. Marin. Effective and interesting detective tale. The detective doesn't do anything very brilliant, but the murders are unusual and the whole mystery is puzzling, all done against an attractive background, with an especially good cast. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f GIVE US THIS NIGHT—Jan Kiepura, Gladys Swarthout. Story by Jacques Bach-

rach. Directed by Alexander Hall. A young fisherman from Sorrento with a marvelous voice goes to Naples to sing Romeo to a lovely Juliet and romance follows. Both voices are great and though the story content is trite, the production on the whole is excellent. Paramount.

f HERE COMES TROUBLE—Paul Kelly, Arline Judge. Screen story by John Bright and Robert Tasker. Directed by Lewis Seiler. Merry melodrama, concerned with a chase after jewel thieves—the melodrama constantly tripping over laughs. 20th Century-Fox.

f LEATHERNECKS HAVE LANDED, THE—Lew Ayres, Isabel Jewel. Screen story by Wellyn Totman and James Gruen. Directed by Howard Bretherton. A young marine in the United States Navy is court-martialed for a brawl in Shanghai but succeeds in making good afterwards. Republic.

f \*LORDAGSKVALLAR (Saturday Nights)—Edvard Persson. Play by Gideon Wahlberg and Walter Stenstroem. Directed by S. Bauman. Hilarious domestic comedy in Swedish, about a hen-pecked husband who finally achieves mastery in his own home. One needs to know the language to get all the laughs, but it is amusing to watch even without understanding the dialogue. Scandinavian.

f LOVE BEFORE BREAKFAST—Carole Lombard, Preston Foster. Novel "Spinster Dinner" by Faith Baldwin. Directed by Walter Lang. An amusing story of a persistent young man who is determined to win the girl he loves and a stubborn girl who fights against him. Universal.

f LOVE ON A BET—Gene Raymond, Helen Broderick, Wendy Barrie. Screen story by Kenneth Earl. Directed by Leigh Jason. A young man's trip, starting with only BVD's, from New York to Los Angeles, to win a bet. Lots of sparkle to it, and plenty of laughs. RKO-Radio.

fj LUCKY TERROR—Hoot Gibson. Screen story by Roger Allman. Directed by Alan James. The struggle for possession of a mine, which is not an unusual plot, but the action is brisk and interesting, the characters likeable, and the photography remarkably good. First Division.

fj \*MODERN TIMES—See Exceptional Photographs Department page 11.

f MUSIC GOES 'ROUND, THE—Harry Richmond, Lionel Stander, Rochelle Hudson. Screen story by John Buchman. Di-

(Continued on page 15)



# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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## Conference Resolutions

**A**DOPTED at the Twelfth Annual Conference of the National Board of Review held in New York City at the Hotel Pennsylvania, February 5th to 8th, were the following resolutions:

- I. Be it resolved that the aims and program of activity of the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures be given the hearty endorsement of this Conference.
- II. Believing that a public increasingly educated in the appreciation and support of the better type of films is the surest guarantee of higher standards of picture production, we urge the further development of local Film Councils, drawing upon all cultural and social forces, as the most effective agency for disseminating reliable advance information about films and encouraging patronage of those most worth while.
- III. We endorse the program designed to give children and young people the opportunity of participating in the selection and evaluation of motion pictures.
- IV. We urge all possible efforts to educate the public in the value of motion

pictures and allied visual aids in education and to increase the practical use of these visual aids through instruction of public opinion, to support the instructional film by such methods as demonstrations, courses in visual instruction and in motion picture appreciation.

- V. We endorse the consistent refusal of the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures to accept any form of censorship of the motion picture, direct or indirect or any form of film control but that of free selection as exercised by the individual, and we oppose any extension of legal censorship powers already existing which might be applied to the selection or classification of motion pictures either for children or adults.

The Resolutions Committee was composed of Mr. George J. Zehrung of New York City, Chairman; Mrs. L. S. Akers of Memphis, Tenn.; Dr. J. F. Montague of New York City; Miss Jane Morrison of Charlotte, N. C.; Mrs. Wilder Tileston of New Haven, Conn.; Col Roy W. Winton of New York City.

### Special Visual Education Number

This is the second special Visual Education Number of this magazine, carrying as it does three more of the addresses delivered at the two sessions of the Twelfth Annual Conference of the National Board of Review on the general subject of "Cultural and Teaching Applications of the Motion Picture: Progress and Possibilities." The six addresses reported in this and the previous issue offer authoritative and informative material on various phases of the production and use of the motion picture for education. Those who have received only this issue and wish the other for a more complete reporting can secure it from this office.

# Integration of Motion Pictures with Other Visual Aids

By GRACE FISHER RAMSEY

*Mrs. Ramsey is Associate Curator of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. She has done much in the Department of Education of the Museum to extend the use of motion pictures and other visual aids both in the museum's educational program and in the city schools.*

HOW, when and why? How important are these three words in a young person's vocabulary! Often parents and teachers feel annoyed and puzzled by the seemingly endless questions. Sometimes the answers are impatient and unsatisfactory; sometimes there are no answers at all. Yet every question is worthy of being answered carefully and accurately. How difficult it often is, however, for words alone to express clearly the explanation desired and to stimulate still further this curiosity or, as it becomes in adults, the spirit of research, exploration, or invention.

Professor John Dewey makes the statement that "Learning involves not only a knowledge of things but also the meanings of things." Meaning as applied to things comes through various types of experience and rarely through the words of a printed page. These do not become ideas until they have been transformed into concepts through real or vicarious experiences. Our schools need fewer words and more activities with things and situations. Many of the elementary experiences are so common to the adult that their importance to the young person is apt to be overlooked. As a result, wrong concepts are formed which may be continued into adult life before they are by chance corrected.

Last Saturday, a friend of mine was standing in the American Museum of Natural History looking at an exhibit of a large section of the globe showing the Arctic regions with the locations of the polar explorations marked upon it. A Museum visitor was standing beside him. Finally the stranger spoke, "I beg your pardon, sir," he said, "I have been interested in looking

at this North Polar region too, but can you tell me why they haven't shown the South Pole here, too? They are close together, you know."

Concealing his astonishment as well as he could, my friend took the derby hat the stranger held in his hand and very carefully tried to illustrate the respective locations of the North and South Poles with the distance of about eight thousand miles between them. The visitor proved to be a research chemist by profession but said he had always had the idea from school days that the two poles of the earth were not far apart.

For useful learning pupils should obtain original, first-hand experiences. But these are often too expensive and too time-consuming. Our research chemist could scarcely afford to be a second Admiral Byrd or a Lincoln Ellsworth. It is just here that the modern tools of learning should be employed to convey to the learners vicariously the materials for observation and study. One of the best of these tools is the motion picture. In fact, it is the greatest medium that has yet been invented for giving one vicarious experiences. It has exceptional capacity for story telling and for creating attitudes. It seems to be reality itself and is doing an enormous service in accomplishing changes in education. With intelligent use it can give much of the real experience which is so basic to modern civilization.

A short time ago a teacher in a lower East Side school of New York City was having her pupils learn a poem in which the word "orchard" occurred. Seeing a puzzled look on one child's face, she asked what the word "orchard" meant. One little boy said, "It's the street where my father keeps his pushcart." Another added, "No, it's the name of our telephone exchange." What a joy it would have been had the teacher been able at that point in the lesson to project on the screen colored slides showing an apple orchard in bloom and in fruit, also a short bit of a motion picture film showing the



beauty of the blossom-covered branches swaying in the breeze.

While many of our schools have inadequate supplies of various objective teaching aids, this lack is often due to officials not realizing that such materials are as necessary to the schools as a telephone is to a business man. Every school can have some of these aids, no matter how much the budget has been reduced.

However, we often find that although the materials may be at hand, many teachers do not use them properly and least of all do we find any integration in their use. This may be due to a lack of initiative or content matter or a lack of just plain thinking of the best way to provide the experiences needed.

Let us take a concrete illustration. In practically all of the Economic Geography courses of the country the students consider some of the problems involved in living in a tropical climate. Let us take the tropical rain forest of the Congo River in Africa. Obviously, it is impossible to use a field trip to give the needed experiences. But this lack can be overcome through an integration of motion pictures with other objective teaching aids. From the American Museum of Natural History a New York City teacher may borrow actual objects which have been used by the peoples of the Congo region. Among these articles there may be a piece of bark cloth made from the inner bark of a wild fig tree, a short, very short, grass skirt, a brass armlet, a head ring for carrying burdens, a field basket used in bringing back to the village the plantains and the manioc roots which form the staple food of these people. Iron axes, spears and daggers wrought by the native iron workers are here. Then, to illustrate the aesthetic life we have a native musical instrument—the marimba—a seed rattle for dancing, a wooden drum, and other articles. On a table stands a miniature habitat group of the Congo showing a native village with the tall forest trees, oil palms, and plantains growing in the background. In the cleared, open space beside the river bank are small human figures in wax engaged in various activities such as pounding out bark cloth, forging iron in the native smithy, making pottery, and beating the large wooden drum, the broadcasting

system so effectively used by these tribes.

As the discussion proceeds about the tropical rain belt of this region and how the people adjust their lives to the climate, the members of the class are free to handle the articles which have had a part in the everyday life activities of these peoples. And in this experience with the materials, the pupils will have an active, inquiring attitude which is so necessary in their learning. How much more meaningful it is to feel of a piece of bark cloth and at the same time be able to look at a motion picture showing a native more or less diligently pounding another piece of bark into shape; or when trying out the edge of a native-wrought iron knife to see in a film how the natives smelt the iron ore and then pound it into the shape of a knife. In addition to this 16mm. motion picture film, the instructor has chosen a few well-colored lantern slides to furnish a more realistic background for these Congo peoples, including some of the various forms of animal life which contribute to their food supply. Photographs and stereographs are also at hand for the individual to examine closely.

With such an integration of various aids in learning how much truer will be the conception of the members of the class about how the Congo natives adjust themselves to their climate and succeed in their problem of living. Objective materials, such as the specimens, raw materials and museum groups aid learning because they are real things and thus convey clear and accurate ideas. The great value of this type of material is that it can be taken in hand and examined in detail while the discussion proceeds in the classroom. Classroom material should be of such character that pupils can get various experiences from contact with it. Also, merely showing a picture either in motion or as a still, is not enough. The pupils need intelligent understanding and guidance in its use so they can form ideas of value. Then many school subjects will receive a reality and meaning needed in all of our education today.

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Have you secured the Annual Catalog of Selected Pictures 1935-36 and A Plan and A Program for Community Motion Picture Councils in one publication?

# Teaching Visual Instruction

By DR. FANNIE W. DUNN

*Dr. Dunn is Professor of Education in charge of Audio-Visual Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. Her study and research in the field of visual education is made available to teachers and others through lectures and publications.*

VISUAL learning is as old as the human race. The eye affords us one of the chief senses by which we have learned about our universe. Learning by representation was a very late need. As long as human beings lived in a small area and experienced all those things which during their lives they have anything to do with they needed no representation. It is when the social environment becomes larger, when human beings are concerned with matters outside of their physical vision, their first-hand experience, that we come to need representation of various kinds.

For many generations, of course, one of our chief means of representation has been the word. But the word as a means of representation is an abstract thing; it is a very difficult thing for many children and is a less economic mode than the actual presentation in visual form. And so eventually pictures came to be used. Pictures as an aid date back as you know to *Orbis Pictus*, in the middle of the 17th century. But pictures, as a matter of fact, as a means of education, are quite new so far as any extensive or valuable use goes. I should say that even during the 19th century there were very few pictures of any kind that were valuable for educational purposes. Illustrations in textbooks were meager and very inadequate. Pictures available for general distribution were rare. People made scrap books then in order to save pictures. They treasured calendars from grocery stores because they did not have pictures of any kind. Then there came the era of the picture postcard. There came the era when commercial companies distributed museum specimens—collections of cotton, cocoa, and all sorts of products—which were used as visual means. And at the beginning of this century we were ushered into a whole new era of an increasing amount of visual materials by means of

which learners could get a clearer idea of the world in which they live.

The problem began to arise even then, with this increasing mass of material, of how to organize it, how to select among it, what to do with it, how to keep from getting lost in the midst of all these accumulations. I will pass over the accumulating types of materials except to mention the stereoscope, which was a curiosity on the old parlor tables and then came to be used in schools, and the stereopticon, which was used by traveling lecturers for community entertainment, as motion pictures now are and has become a part of the school facilities in a very great many cases.

Today something over half of the states furnish visual education materials from the State Departments or from the universities. Though these materials at present as distributed by State Departments are mainly of the still picture kind—slides or still pictures—they are increasingly of the motion picture type, and only very recently the sound motion picture. As matters now stand the visual materials which teachers in general have to use are of the still type, the stereopticon type, rather than of the motion picture type.

It has been recognized for the past fifteen years, or more than that, that teachers need instruction in using even those types of material. Of course those of us who are acquainted with the teaching of visual aids know of the book, which is more or less of a classic on the subject, by Mrs. Dorris<sup>1</sup> of California, but teachers in general do not. They need also to know sources and how to select from the available material. They need to be acquainted with criteria designed to aid in selection, and to become skilled in using them.

When the motion picture began to become generally used, there came a realization of its potentiality for teaching purposes. Some people say, and I think justly, that so far as education is concerned the motion picture

<sup>1</sup> Dorris, Anna V. *Visual Instruction in the Public School*. Ginn and Co., 1928.



may be a greater invention than the printing press was. It may to some extent supplant the printing press. I feel sure it can never entirely replace it, but the possibilities ahead are enormous.

There are, however, a number of hindrances to its present use. One of these is the cost of equipment. The depression had a very great effect upon that. I think we are materially slower in getting into the use of motion pictures as a teaching aid than we would have been if the depression had not hit us just about the time the idea was getting well under way.

Another difficulty is a lack of knowledge of sources. Where can materials be obtained? And not only where can the film be got, but what is the content of the film? I think one of the things that is very seriously in the way of teachers and schools using motion pictures is that it is so difficult to discover what is in a motion picture. It is so much more difficult than it is to go into a library and glance over a book and see what the nature of that book is. We lack at present evaluation of available materials. We have long lists of material in our State Department offerings. Some of them are more or less evaluated, but very few as yet are adequately evaluated. That is one of the projects which lies before us. It is a project which a few people are beginning to attack.

All of those things are in the body of knowledge and understanding which somehow teachers must get before they can be efficient users of this material. In addition to their inadequate preparation in these respects, teachers are untrained in use of the mechanical equipment. A principal of a school in an article which appeared recently in one of the educational magazines made the statement that when the mechanical routine of handling projection equipment has been acquired, the proper use of visual aids as part of the curriculum will develop.<sup>1</sup> I think there is a great deal of truth in that. The machine, itself, stands in the way. The teachers are afraid to undertake the new procedure. The school people themselves,

the persons in charge of the school, think of it as something new and remote and difficult. Teachers, then, need to become acquainted with the ways and means of using equipment.

A summary statement, which I think is a pretty good one, from the State Director of Education in Pennsylvania<sup>2</sup> is to the effect that it is necessary that teachers know the types of visual and other sensory aids, where to get them and how to evaluate them, and when and how to use them in the instructional process. That is quite a big body of understanding, but it is the understanding which teachers need to make thorough going use of visual aids.

There is quite a long list of desirable skills listed by Dr. Spencer,<sup>3</sup> the principal of one of the teacher-training schools in Pennsylvania, which State by the way, has done some of the most extensive work in the United States in training teachers for the use of visual aids. The teacher, according to Dr. Spencer, should have practice in the care and operation of projectors. He should know how to correct such troubles as clouded illuminator, too small or too large a picture, failure of lamps to light, poor focus, optical system out of alignment, and spectrum colors on margin of screen. He should know how to operate especially 16mm. projectors and in some school systems 35mm. In addition to that the course should also include the making of lantern slides, especially those on plain and etched glass and with cellophane. It is also desirable that the teacher should know how to take, develop and finish good pictures and to make photographic slides.

That is quite a large order, and probably not all teachers will need to fill all of it, but those skills are among the total qualifications which are going to be increasingly necessary for the best use by teachers of visual aids now available, or now rapidly becoming available, in order to expedite and advance the learning process.

<sup>2</sup> Hoban, C. F. Responsibility of teacher-training institutions for the preparation of teachers in the technics of visual and sensory aids. N. E. A. Proceedings, 1931:957.

<sup>3</sup> Spencer, Herbert L. Training teachers to recognize vital values in education. N. E. A. Proceedings, 1930:920-23.

<sup>1</sup> Hoek, Floyd G. Getting the faculty machine-minded. National Elementary Principal, Thirteenth Yearbook, 1934: 167.

So there have been in the last few years certain recommendations and resolutions to the effect that all teachers preparing for certification in public schools anywhere should be required to have a course in the use of visual aids. There was a resolution, for example, passed by the Pennsylvania Visual Education Conference in February 1931 recommending that this should be required. There was a similar recommendation at the International Conference of Cinematography in Rome in 1934 and other such recommendations have been made. So far they are not being extensively put into effect. The State of Pennsylvania has the requirement in its certification requirement that every teacher who receives a certificate to teach in the state must have had a course in visual aids, and the inclusion is very much the type of inclusion I have indicated to you. No other state so far as I know has as yet made this requirement.

During the last ten years or so, there have been offered by institutions here and there courses in the use of visual materials, but they have been optional, and it is only today, I think, that we are beginning to press this idea that all teachers need to be prepared for visual educational activity.

McClusky<sup>1</sup> found in 1925 that there were over twenty institutions in the United States offering courses, usually in the summer. As a matter of fact we are not so very much further along than that at this time. The Educational Screen<sup>2</sup> last summer published a list of the states which were offering summer courses to teachers in visual instruction. Those states included Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Utah, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. In some of the states several institutions were offering such courses but they were the summer courses only, and it is not by any means a general thing as yet that there is an intensive course offered or a course offered during the winter session. Some persons

have requested that courses be made available to teachers through Extension Departments, and some of that is being done. The Extension Department of a university or of a Teachers College sometimes offers courses to the teachers in any community which wants to develop a program. But you see we still have a very large task before us if we are going to attempt to prepare teachers for this very large part of their work which is concerned in using visual materials. And when you realize how important those materials are, and that every teacher is trained almost from infancy to use books, you see that a very large part of the program is still far from developed.

At present in offering a course my experience has been that it has been necessary to put a great deal of time and attention on the use of visual aids other than the motion picture because of the comparatively small number of schools which are yet equipped with motion picture material. One has to take teachers where one finds them, but as the schools become better equipped and as better films become available—that is more or less a vicious circle, you have to have better equipment in order to have better material, and you have to have better material in order to be better equipped, and of course you have to have better preparation of teachers to have both—we shall come more generally to the idea that teachers must be prepared. And courses in the preparation of teachers will then go very much farther than the courses which at present are provided.

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## The Annual Bridge

THE Eighth Annual Bridge of the National Board of Review will be held on Saturday afternoon, April the 25th, at the Hotel Pennsylvania. More details about guests, prizes, etc., will be given in our next issue but we give the date here so that our readers from New York City and nearby can reserve the day.

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<sup>1</sup> McClusky, F. Dean. Finding the facts of visual education: growth through teacher-training. Ed. Screen, 4:203, 272. April, May, 1925.

<sup>2</sup> Summer courses in visual instruction. Ed. Screen, 14: 134 May, 1935.



# Motion Pictures in Medical Education

By DR. J. F. MONTAGUE

*Dr. Montague is Director of the New York Intestinal Sanitarium, Inc., and Editor of "Health Digest." He is the author of many books on medical subjects and has done notable pioneer work in the production and use of medical films.*

AS soon as the motion picture assumed its workable form, leaders in the field of education immediately thought of the idea of applying it to the task of teaching. Then about fifteen years ago medical motion pictures began to be taken seriously. In the field of medicine the task of teaching is increasingly great; that is, new subjects are being introduced continually into the curriculum, new discoveries are being made, new techniques are being evolved and all in all the educational traffic becomes very congested. The motion picture film offers a handy escape from that traffic because one can with it present material in a very thoroughly edited manner and in a manner which is quite capable of ready absorption on the part of students.

In attempting to evolve a technique for presenting this material, I believe that in the field of medical education we have passed through exactly the same throes of growth that have occurred in other fields. That is, there was at first a period of confusion; everybody was trying to make a medical film. As in the case of many other industries, the amateurs contributed almost as much to its development as did the professionals, and it was my good fortune to be one of those amateurs who entered into the field of producing medical motion pictures, that is for my own benefit.

One thing we speedily learned was that the motion picture film used for educational purposes had to be considered as potential literature. That is, it had to achieve a form. Hence my contention that the medical books of the next generation will be printed on celluloid instead of on paper for the simple reason that it is a superior method of presenting facts.

To briefly review what those advantages are, I might point out first the ready availability of the motion picture. For instance,

much of our material for teaching purposes is of a transitory nature. That is, a case comes into the hospital and while there the patient is viewed and the various lessons that may be learned by observation or deduction or operation are gained from that particular patient. But after the patient goes, he is no longer available for teaching purposes. You might say that after his condition is cured, he is no longer available as an object lesson. But with the motion picture film one can preserve the record of his late lamented disease for all time use in the great edification of students to come.

At the time I was at Bellevue Hospital I collected materials and observations on motion picture film over a period of nearly nine years and I was able to show cases of almost any ailment in far greater numbers than would have been available at any one time in that particular hospital. And Bellevue Hospital is, as you know, a very busy hospital, with a large number of cases. But if, for instance, a fellow doctor dropped in from out of town and said, "I would like to see a case of this or that," ten chances to one that would be just the time when that particular type of a case was not available. With the motion picture film you merely refer to your library and pick out the film that shows all the cases which have come in the time prior to that. In other words, at the end of nine years I had on record all the cases of certain diseases which had come into my clinic during the preceding nine years. Now there is no place on earth where you can get a nine year clinic in a half hour except through motion pictures.

Another advantage of the motion picture film is its durability. That is, if you have a negative you can reproduce prints as fast as they wear out.

Then, too, there is its flexibility. You can edit the film once, twice or every day if you wish. You can insert new material and you can take out old material. When

you get a better example of a certain thing you can delete the previous one and insert your latest acquisition.

Experience with all of this led me to conclude that eventually we would witness an evolution of what I consider film literature. It became increasingly apparent that what we should do is to create a complete monograph on one subject; we will say a certain type of disease. We should start from the beginning and treat it just as if we were writing a book about it; that is, find out factors pertaining to its cause and portray them on film. If it can't be shown in actual pictures we can imitate our friend, Mickey Mouse, in his animated cartoons and present in a very clear manner the exact mode of production of a certain disease or certain diseased condition.

By applying all the principles that are used in entertainment films to the problem of medical education we are able to produce a series of monographs, so to speak, on a great number of cases of, we will say, gall bladder disease. We show exactly how the condition occurs, the actual gall bladder at the time of the disease, the operation for the correction of gall stone, the convalescence of the patient. The whole thing can be presented in book form, that is, in a monograph form.

Of course the next step is the formation of a library of such monographs, etc. That has been done in the field of other educational films and it is now being done in the field of the medical films.

About eight or nine years ago I conceived the idea of gathering all of the films pertaining to one particular specialty into a course and of giving it as a motion picture course in that particular specialty.

I think that will be eventually the end result in the use of motion pictures for educational purposes. That is, they will all be gathered and classified into a definite course of instruction.

This is very desirable because when a new student approaches a subject he hasn't the same clear-cut conception of what is ahead of him that the instructor has. If the instructor can lay out a definite course as he would ordinarily in classroom teaching, if he can lay out this course in motion picture

films, he can feed to his embryo student the exact information and instruction that he wishes to give him.

Apart from the matter of educational films as far as medical schools are concerned, there is the use of films for educational purposes in the field of health which is a much broader and to my mind equally important field.

Certain institutions such as the American Tuberculosis Association have used films with great success in the education of entire communities as to the care of sick people affected with tuberculosis and in the prevention of tuberculosis.

I think that in time to come the motion picture film will be increasingly important in the control of epidemics. Certainly there is no better way to instruct a group of people in the protection of themselves against certain communal diseases.

There are other ways in which health enters the film. For instance, in the field of theatrical films there has been a tendency, it seems to me, of late to dramatize health. Certainly *The March of Time* in aiding the National Safety Council in controlling automobile accidents has done a splendid piece of work in their sequence *Sudden Death*. There are other instances where that has been done. *The Story of Louis Pasteur* is the name of a new picture which presents another phase of health. In one way it offers the best argument for vivisection that I have ever seen portrayed on the screen. It shows what can be done with the sensible employment of laboratory animals in the production of vaccines and the methods of preventing various diseases.

All these things to my mind prove that the motion picture has an increasing field of usefulness in presenting to the public the essential facts pertaining to health in just the same way that it is of value in the medical schools in teaching students. I foresee a very definite, increasing recognition of that. Of course the great trouble with the project is the need for, we will say, further funds to carry on the work.

At the time I was interested in medical films I made a suggestion which I think could be carried out at this time and en-

(Continued on page 14)



# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS DEPARTMENT

*This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of Exceptional and Honorable*

*Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.*

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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FRANK WARD

## Modern Times

*Written and directed by Charles Chaplin, assistant directors, Carter de Haven and Henry Bergman, musical director Alfred Newman, photographed by Rollie Thotheroh and Ira Morgan. Produced by Charles Chaplin, distributed by United Artists.*

### *The cast*

*A Tramp* ..... Charles Chaplin  
*A Gamin* ..... Paulette Goddard  
*A Cafe Proprietor* ..... Henry Bergman  
*A Mechanic* ..... Chester Conklin  
*The Burglars* ..... { Stanley Sandford  
                                      Hank Mann  
                                      Louis Natheux  
*President of a Steel Corporation* ..... Allen Garcia

FOR something like a quarter of a century Charlie Chaplin has been the delight of ordinary movie-goers, the masses who in the beginning were articulate only with their nickels and dimes, with which they set huge fortunes a-building. In later years the literati, the dilettanti, the cognoscenti and all the rest of the esthetes hailed him as artist and genius, even as social philosopher in the guise of clown. Through it all the world has gone on laughing at him and loving him, and now he is the only one of the screen-shadows—so multitudinous, which flicker so brilliantly and so briefly—who has not changed or vanished with the years. Unaging, vitality undiminished, he creates something of a feeling that perhaps our mortal eyes are looking upon a bit of immortality.

Report, legend and wish have evolved such a confusing figure of Chaplin the man that trying to get back of his work into his philosophy and intentions is pretty sure to be a fruitless effort. It is his work itself, looked at objectively, which we must take as the only reliable representation of

the man as an artist, and it is as an artist that he is potent in the world. Charlie, the screen creation, is what he has given us to judge him by.

Looking at the Chaplin films in their long series from the beginning, there is an amazing consistency in them. Chaplin's actor background—vaudeville and the early Keystone lot in the days of Sennett's brilliant prime—shaped his style. Speed, directness, economy, became his tools. In a fantastic world of crudely painted sets, where even the photographed actual streets seemed slightly incredible, peopled with grotesque creatures whose moustaches, beards, eyebrows, clothes, created an impression of crude dummies animated by some demoniac galvanization, where a pretty girl, just by being pretty and almost real in such surroundings, seemed the most unreal thing of all, a frantic parody of life raced across the screen. Swift and ineluctable as a hurled custard pie, it leaped at its audiences and struck them smack in the risibilities. And in the midst of all the frenzied activity, Charlie, impoverished gentility and ragged chivalry, eternally beset and eternally unquenchable.

That insane slapstick is gone from the screen, its fantasy surviving only in the cartoon of Walt Disney and Max Fleischer and their hordes of imitators—and in Chaplin himself. Chaplin has stuck to his tradition. The same technique, the same somewhat unreal world for background, for fellow-creatures the same dummy-like people with their grotesqueness only partly modified, even the sets and photography remarkably the same—and the same Charlie.

*Modern Times*, with a foreword and a pictorial comparison of sheep being driven through a gate with factory workers being herded to their toil, hints that perhaps it is going to be a comment of some sort on the life of laborers in the machine age. But very soon the film becomes a series of episodes loosely strung together, any one of which might be one of his old two-reelers done with more care and better studio equipment. These old gags—polished up till they are funnier than ever—the lack of spoken dialogue, the use of old-style sub-titles, and Charlie with the same physical aspect, give the picture a slightly archaic quality, something lovable because it is also rather quaint. And it is also, happily, immensely funny. It is a joy to see Charlie skate again, dance again, be a waiter again, work in a department store again. And he also sings.

But with so much surface sameness there is an arresting difference. Five years have passed since *City Lights*, and many more since the early two-reelers. Some of the elements that have always been in the Chaplin shadow-world have been brought into a different focus by what has been happening in the real world. The hilarious chaos of films like *Easy Street* has a disquieting way of not seeming so purely hilarious any more. Violence that once brought only howls of merriment awakes, somewhere in the laughter, uncomfortable overtones that are not funny at all. Something too real, as Charmian von Wiegand has pointed out, crops out in the fantastic Chaplin universe, too close to things we know, to fit restfully into a movie that was made only to give us mirth.

No one can say (to repeat) what Chaplin's intentions were, or if he intended to make people think as well as laugh. If he meant only to do the same old stuff, as mere entertainment, time and awakening perceptions have made a shift in the way things look that gives implications to his comedy it did not have before. For many eyes the sight of Charlie, that little man continually cracked down upon by life and the way we live it, brings something close to tears: not tears of sentiment or of easy pity but the saltier tears that can, if only

vaguely, provoke questioning and indignation.

*Modern Times* says different things to different people. Almost anything can be read into it. It is one of the funniest and one of the most compassionate films Chaplin ever made—within such a range you can find almost anything you are looking for. But it is reasonable to contend that if Chaplin was trying to make a satire with more point than merely to suggest the chaotic jumble of human nature and society, with five years and all the resources he can command he could have made a more clear-cut job of it.

Many familiar faces are absent from this film; but there are Chester Conklin and Hank Mann left, and Henry Bergman. The girl, Paulette Goddard, is a new kind of girl for a Chaplin film, and she gives the film a new kind of ending. At last Charlie does not step off into the fade-out alone—he has a companion. But her great difference is that she is human—conventionalized though she is with rags and such things for a gammin type, she is a clear and unmistakable note of reality in the medley of fantasy. Is she, and what she means, the prelude to something different in Chaplin films?

J. S. H.

## The Prisoner of Shark Island

Written by Nunnally Johnson, directed by John Ford, photographed by Bert Glennon. Produced and distributed by Twentieth Century-Fox, a Darryl F. Zanuck production.

### The cast

Dr. Samuel Alexander Mudd	Warner Baxter
Mrs. Peggy Mudd	Gloria Stuart
Colonel Dyer	Claude Gillingwater
Mr. Erikson	Arthur Byron
Doctor MacIntyre	O. P. Heggie
Commandant	Harry Carey
Corporal O'Tolle	Francis Ford
Lieutenant Lovett	John McGuire
John Wilkes Booth	Francis MacDonald
General Ewing	Douglas J. Wood
Sergeant Rankin	John Carradine
Martha Mudd	Joyce Kay
Sergeant Cooper	Fred Kohler, Jr.
Buck	Ernest Whitman
Abraham Lincoln	Frank McGlynn
Orderly	Maurice Murphy

A great many people had never heard, before this picture came along, of Dr. Samuel Mudd—the doctor whose name was Mudd (a familiar phrase whose



origin has long been lost). He lived in Virginia at the time of the war between the states, and on a night in April, 1865, he was visited by a man with a broken leg, who rode up in the rain and was in a great hurry to be on his way again. Dr. Mudd gave the leg what hurried treatment he could, and the unknown rider departed. Soon after, soldiers came searching, and arrested the doctor. He was accused of aiding John Wilkes Booth to escape after he had shot President Lincoln. The whole country, in a growing hysteria of grief and indignation, was demanding punishment of the assassins. Dr. Mudd's innocent connection with the fleeing murderer was fatal: he was convicted, and sent to a pestilential island-prison off the Florida keys. His wife bestirred herself untiringly to secure his vindication and freedom, but he might have rotted to death on that island if a yellow fever epidemic hadn't broken out, and given him a chance to behave so heroically that it won him an eventual pardon.

One of the most stirring dramatic themes there is is the fight of a righteous man against injustice. When it happens to be the case of a man who actually lived, the dramatic tensivity is heightened by a sense of reality that even the most convincing fiction lacks, and over it hovers the disquieting question: May not this thing happen again? The school classes in history do not learn about Dr. Mudd: here for once is a movie that is usefully educational.

The film has great virtues and commonplace faults. Beginning with the shooting of Lincoln in the theatre, up through the trial of the alleged conspirators, it is vivid and strong, with the director and camera man handling and shaping and presenting their material with assured mastery. Once the doctor is on our American Devil's Island a more theatrical element begins to creep in, not only into the story but into the manipulation of it, and more than a little confusion about who is who, and why. Furious studio hurricanes—two of them—are brought in, one to help the doctor banish the epidemic (though later it appears that the banishment was far from complete) and the other to provide noise and distraction when some business about firing

on the flag and compelling ships to land their supplies on the island is getting pretty incredible. The massed shiny bodies of negroes, the lines of sharks cleaving the water like a flotilla of submarines—such things seem too obviously manufactured for effect, and not done well enough to be effective.

The story of Dr. Mudd was a cruel and brutal one. The worst of it could not be put on the screen. But unfortunately some guiding mind tried to mitigate what could be shown by putting in sentimental and comic relief. Quite uselessly, as it turns out, for enough brutality remains to be distasteful to those who are too sensitive to bear looking upon such things, and the relief is only an annoyance to those who can take their horrors straight. The cute child—who remains in a state of arrested growth throughout the picture—the comic southern colonel, the stereotyped portrayal of negroes for the usual show-business purposes of comic figures, loyal Uncle Toms or jungle brutes—these are all lazy expedients to slur over spots that called for work and imagination.

But for all these drawbacks, which stand out unpleasingly because they are a weakness in a fabric that is otherwise so strong and substantial, the picture is unusual and important. Dramatically it would have been more satisfying if a complete vindication for the doctor had been brought about in the end, instead of letting his freedom come from a pardon which had no relation to the injustice of his imprisonment. But truth and a perfect dramatic contour do not necessarily go together. Most men unjustly in prison are not so lucky as to have fever epidemics come along to provide occasion for spectacular heroism, and so they fail to get pardons, to say nothing of vindication.—J. S. H.

## The March of Empire

ONCE more a screen biography, made in England to picture one of England's most daring imperialistic dreamers. Oddly enough, it has far less of the Kipling glamor and the glory of the

white man's burden than many a film made in Hollywood. It is called *Rhodes*.

The film is a combined product of two directors, one working at home with his principal actors, the other in Africa with the African skies and landscapes to conjure with. The whole thing is episodic, and in the end anti-climactic, because it is really only a sketch of Rhodes in his capacity of empire builder, and pretty much all on the surface at that. He had a dream, and he set all the forces working that made his dream come true. The implications of all that this involved, for the natives, for the Boers, and for England, receive only the barest attention. But hints of them are present for those who can see.

Rhodes, still young and, with the discovery of diamonds in Kimberley, already taking his first step toward his goal, is warned that unless he is careful he has only a few months to life—with great care he can perhaps live six years. But his impelling dream—to unite South Africa into a British colony—is like a faith that removes mountains. His heart, always threatening to bring an end to him, keeps somehow going, till at last he is premier of South Africa, with a vast country bigger than Europe named after him, and all the seeds planted that would grow into the long and inglorious Boer War and the final dreamed-of union. But long before that end had come the heart had given up its struggling and Rhodes lay on his high, wind-swept mountain top.

No story of Rhodes could be really complete without the Boer War. That, though he did not himself wage it, was the climax of him and his desires—a dingy, ignoble climax. The film leaves that out, and thus misses the crowning external point of his vast adventure. But there is something like a spiritual equivalent to it in his death, with its effect of loneliness and defeat. And all the way through, alongside the appearance of triumphant progress, there moves a subtle intimation that his success has something hollow in it, and that what he built so assuredly would never have the real splendor of his young-man's dream. A vague ghost of disillusionment seems always crowding close to him.

Somehow, with its sturdy Kruger (representing a rugged virtue that was far from being the whole true Kruger), its distracted, despairing Matebele chief, its Dr. Jameson and his fatal loyalty, its lady novelist with her "liberal" compassion for the native "children," this film conveys something that seems true about the way civilization marches into the dark places of the earth. Something very complicated and distressing. It is certainly not a panegyric of imperialism. It is rather a confused projection of confused and contradictory human beings, with great matters in their hands which only gods could handle wisely. Whether this was the intention back of the film can not be known, but that is what comes through it most clearly.

Some excellent actors—Walter Huston, Oscar Homolka, Basil Sidney, Frank Cellier, Peggy Ashcroft, and the native Ndanisa Kumalo—help enormously to give this film its best qualities.—J. S. H.

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(Continued from page 10)

larged upon. I suggested that certain people who have made their entire fortune, we will say, in the production of motion picture film should establish—I refer to Eastman and DuPont and people of that kind—a medical film foundation. That is, they should make available the materials for the production of films. I feel that that was a very sensible suggestion. As a matter of fact some slight movement along that line was made. But at this time I think it could be carried still further to include all educational films. Certainly these people who make a fortune every year out of motion picture film should be persuaded if you wish, or coerced if you wish, into separating themselves from some of that for the benefit of the people who are intelligent enough to put something on the films worth looking at. I am afraid I will be accused of citizenship in the U. S. S. R. or something like that, but the fact of the matter is that those of us who consider ourselves thinkers should do a little thinking for ourselves once in a while. That is not a very selfish thought when you think that all we are trying to do is to make available our increased intelligence.



(Continued from page 2)

rected by Victor Schertzinger. A gay and clever story of a show-boat company brought to Broadway, with the "Music Goes 'Round" song given a brilliant de luxe presentation. Columbia.

f PREVIEW MURDER MYSTERY—Gail Patrick, Reginald Denny. Screen story by Garnett Weston. Directed by Robert Florey. An exciting murder which takes place during the preview of a picture in a Hollywood studio. The director, the leading lady and the leading man are all singled out for the vengeance of some mysterious person. Exciting with plenty of suspense. Paramount.

f \*PRISONER OF SHARK ISLAND, THE—See Exceptional Photoplays Department, page 12.

f \*RHODES, THE EMPIRE BUILDER—See Exceptional Photoplays Department, page 13.

f \*TRAIL OF THE LONESOME PINE, THE—Henry Fonda, Sylvia Sidney. Novel by John Fox, Jr. Directed by Henry Hathaway. Dramatic and romantic story of feuds in the Kentucky-Virginia mountains. An ancient feud between the Falins and the Tollivers comes to a head over the right-of-way to a mine but finally they put away their guns for all time. The first outdoor feature length picture made entirely in color. Paramount.

j VALLEY OF THE LAWLESS—John Mack Brown. Screen story by Charles F. Royal. Directed by Robert N. Bradbury. An old-time Western, and a pretty good one, with virile types, buried treasure, a boy and plenty of vigorous fighting and riding. Supreme.

fj \*VOICE OF BUGLE ANN, THE—Lionel Barrymore. Novel by MacKinlay Kantor. Directed by Richard Thorpe. An unusual and refreshing story of country people in Missouri, and their hunting dogs. Human and moving and dramatic, with a fine cast. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

m WIFE VERSUS SECRETARY—Clark Gable, Myrna Loy, Jean Harlow. Cosmopolitan story by Faith Baldwin. Directed by Clarence Brown. Just what the title implies, with gossip and lack of mutual trust making the trouble. Handsome production, sometimes too long and talky. Jean Harlow plays an admirable character for a change, excellently. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f WOMAN TRAP—Gertrude Michael, George Murphy. Screen story by Charles Brackett. Directed by Harold Young. Romantic story of a newspaper reporter who goes to Mexico to catch a gang of diamond thieves, and finds himself involved with a senator's daughter who is being held for ransom. Paramount.

## SHORT SUBJECTS

### INFORMATIONALS

- fj COLLIE, THE—Nice little picture showing a little boy and his collie puppy and many other collies. Paramount.
- f FILMING THE FANTASTIC (Adventures of a Newsreel Cameraman)—Chances the cameramen take. 20th Century-Fox.
- j HERE COMES THE ZOO—All kinds of animals. Paramount.
- fj HONG KONG HIGHLIGHTS (Magic Carpet)—One of this excellent series. 20th Century-Fox.
- fj ICE CUT-UPS—All kinds of ice sports and games. Columbia.
- fj \*LET'S DANCE—Fascinating pictorial analysis of tap dancing, adagio dancing, etc., helped enormously by slow motion, with entertaining comment. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f MARCH OF TIME—Moscow, and how life is becoming easier there; the Hartman formula for painless dentistry; Father Livine and his followers in Harlem. RKO-Radio.
- f MED KRONPRINSPARET PA RESA I VAREND (With the Crownprince and Crownprincess on a Journey through Vaerend)—Scandinavian.
- fj PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 8—Sailing in Sidney, Australia; how animal voices are made over radio. Paramount.
- f SANDHAMN—Picturesque film about yachting. Scandinavian.
- f SCREEN SNAPSHOTS NO. 6—Stars and their homes. Columbia.
- f SLALOM—Beautiful skiing picture with the slalom race. Scandinavian.
- f STAR REPORTER, THE—Hed Husing introducing screen and radio stars. Paramount.
- fj WEST POINT OF THE SOUTH, THE—Life at Virginia Military Institute. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj WINGED CHAMPIONS—Showing wild bird life, excellent shots of birds on the wing. Paramount.
- fj WINGED PAGEANTRY—Lovely pictures of seabirds. RKO-Radio.
- fj WINTER SPORTS—Unusually good picture of winter sports. RKO-Radio.

### CARTOONS

- j CAT CAME BACK, THE (Merrie Melody)—Cats and mice fraternize. Vitaphone.
- fj CLEAN SHAVEN (Popeye the Sailor)—Popeye and his rival both lose out with Olive Oyl. Paramount.
- fj DR. BLUEBIRD (Cheery Cartoon)—Columbia.
- fj GOOSE THAT LAID THE GOLDEN EGGS, THE (Rainbow Parade)—Felix the Kat in an amusing cartoon. RKO-Radio.
- j I WANNA PLAY HOUSE (Merrie Melody)—Two little kittens have a bad time. Vitaphone.
- fj NOT NOW (Betty Boop)—Betty's little dog and his troubles with the alley cats. Paramount.
- fj RUN SHEEP RUN—Charming color cartoon. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f TOONERVILLE TROLLEY—Color cartoon with favorite characters from the Fontaine Fox comics. RKO-Radio.

### COMEDIES, MUSICALS, NOVELTIES AND SERIALS

- fj ADVENTURES OF FRANK MERRIWELL, THE (Serial) NOS. 7-12—See December, 1935 issue. Universal.
- f ALL AMERICAN TOOTHACHE—Thelma Todd plus Patsy Kelly minus Mickey Daniels, in an amusing farce about football and dentists. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj AULIOSCOPIKS—A novelty demonstrating one way of getting a third dimension on the screen. Amusing and somewhat instructive as well. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f BROADWAY BALLYHOO—Dancing and singing. Vitaphone.
- fj CARNIVAL DAYS—Henry Armetta the center of a Technicolor carnival. Vitaphone.
- f CARNIVAL TIME—Carnival sideshow of singing and dancing. Universal.
- f COUNT TAKES THE COUNT, THE—Charlie Chase in an amusing comedy. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- j DARKEST AFRICA (serial) NOS. 1-4—Clyde Beatty, looking for animals in Africa, finds a young Tarzan in the jungle and goes with him to rescue his sister. Pretty good in an Edgar Rice Burroughs way. Republic.
- f GIVE 'IM AIR—Joe Cook as Mr. Widget, with all his gadgets, becomes a radio announcer. Educational.
- f MOSCOW MOODS—Good Russian music and dancing. Paramount.
- f MOVIE MELODIES ON PARADE—Song hits made famous by pictures in which they appeared. Paramount.
- f OUNCE OF INVENTION, AN—Some of Ray Gross' ideas for inventions—mostly for the home—visualized entertainingly. Vitaphone.

## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures is a citizen body, organized in 1909 by the People's Institute of New York City as a medium for reflecting intelligent public opinion regarding a growing art and entertainment. This is still the Board's function, together with that of disseminating information on the subject of motion pictures and carrying on a constructive program having to do with community cooperation in the advancement and uses of the motion picture.

The National Board is opposed to legal censorship and is in favor of the community better films plan of placing emphasis upon and building support for the finer and more worthwhile films. It is at all times glad to cooperate with any agency to encourage and guide the motion picture in developing its possibilities both as recreation and as entertainment.

It carries on its work through various committees. All members of the committees serve without pay. No member is connected with the motion picture industry. They are representative of varied interests and activities and many are connected with large public welfare organizations or educational institutions.

The General Committee is a body evolved out of the original group organized in 1909. It is the appeal and central advisory committee of the National Board to which policies are referred and to which decisions of the Review Committee regarding pictures may be carried either by the producers or by the Review Committee itself.

The Executive Committee is composed of members of the General Committee and is the directing body of the National Board, charged with the formulation of policies, the election of members, the expenditure of funds and supervision of all administrative affairs.

The Review Committee is a large group of 300 members carrying on the work of reviewing the films. It is divided into sub-groups which meet for review per schedule during each week in the projection rooms of the various motion picture companies.

The Membership Committee supervises the membership list of the Review Committee and recommends the names of proposed new members for consideration by the Executive Committee.

The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays is composed of critics and students of the cinema interested particularly in encouraging the artistic development of the motion picture. It reviews and publishes a critique of the finest films and assists community groups in the showing of unusual films to special audiences. Its pioneer activity has done much to lay the foundation for the Little Photoplay Theatre movement and to stimulate the organization of subscription groups to develop audiences for the support of the creative achievements of the screen.

## NATIONAL MOTION PICTURE COUNCIL

The community or field work of the National Board of Review is conducted under its National Motion Picture Council, through affiliated membership groups, service contact groups and correspondents throughout the country. The National Council assists in the organization and program of work of local groups which are usually called Councils.

These Councils follow a plan initiated by the National Board in 1916 of having a membership composed of representatives from many organizations, cultural, educational, recreational, religious, and civic, so that they typify the original movement for community participation in the development and best use of the motion picture as recreation and education.

The objectives of such organizations are as follows:

To demonstrate through the education of public opinion, the effectiveness of selection and classification, instead of censorship, as a means of forwarding the development of the motion picture and its best uses.

To encourage through open meetings, forums, classes and other means, the study of the motion picture as a medium of entertainment, education and artistic expression.

To concentrate the attention of the public on specific worthwhile films through the publication of a Photoplay Guide to the selected pictures being currently shown at local theatres.

To arrange family Friday night or week-end programs of selected films, and junior matinees of pictures particularly suited to the tastes of children, through cooperation with local exhibitors.

To endorse and further the use of visual education through motion pictures in the schools.

To arrange and promote occasional exhibitions of exceptional and cultural films that would not normally be shown in the commercial theatres.

### PUBLICATIONS

The National Board of Review and its Council as an aid to the groups carrying out these objectives furnishes an informational service through its publications.

#### National Board of Review Magazine (monthly)

\$2.00 a year for individual subscriptions  
\$1.00 a year to Council or club groups

#### Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures

\$2.50 a year when taken alone, available at a special rate of \$1.00 in conjunction with the Magazine.

#### Selected Pictures Catalog (annual) 25c

#### Special Film Lists 10c ea.

Such as Selected Films for Children's Showings, Selected Book-Films, Educational Films, etc.

#### National Board of Review—Its Background, Growth and Present Status free

#### National Board of Review—How It Works free

#### A Plan and a Program for Community Motion Picture Councils free



APR 17 1936

# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

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*The Three Women in the Russian film "Three Women" (see page 13)*

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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

- f BIG BROWN EYES—Cary Grant, Joan Bennett. Screen story by James Edward Grant. Directed by Raoul Walsh. A light romantic detective story in which a smart little manicurist helps her detective fiancé catch a band of crooks. Paramount.
- f BORDER CABALLERO — Tim McCoy. Screen story by Norman S. Hall. Directed by Sam Newfield. An unpretentious Western that does not follow the usual formula too closely. It's not dull, the people and dialogue are natural, the whole thing pretty good of its kind. Puritan.
- fj CAPTAIN JANUARY—Shirley Temple, Guy Kibbee. From story by Lora E. Richards. Directed by David Butler. A charming Maine village story with Shirley Temple as the happy-go-lucky child brought up by an old light-house-keeper who rescued her from the sea. The story though unlike the original is well adapted to the star's versatile talents. 20th Century-Fox.
- f CHARLIE CHAN AT THE CIRCUS—Warner Oland. Screen story by Robert Ellis and Helen Logan. Directed by Harry Lachman. Better than the more recent Chan pictures, brighter and livelier, with a circus background to give it colorful variety. 20th Century-Fox.
- f COLLEEN—Ruby Keeler, Dick Powell, Jack Oakie. Screen story by Robert Lord. Directed by Alfred E. Green. An amusing musical comedy with an excellent cast and good dancing. The lyrics are tuneful and the production lavish. The story concerns an elderly wealthy man-about-town and his escapades. Warner.
- f \*COUNTRY DOCTOR, THE—Jean Hersholt, Dorothy Peterson, the Dionne Quintuplets. Novel by Willis Thornton. Directed by Henry King. A doctor in a winter-bound northern town, with no modern conveniences to help him, tries vainly to get a hospital built for him until the quintuplets bring him fame. Curiosity may get people into the theatre, but once there they will find a fine human story to stir them, in which the babies are only a climax. 20th Century-Fox. (See also page 14, "The Miracle of the Age").
- f DESERT GOLD—Larry "Buster" Crabbe. Novel by Zane Grey. Directed by James Hogan. A good old melodrama of the West with splendid riding and beautiful scenery. The story deals with the fight between the white men and the Indians for ownership of a mine. The love interest centers around a young mining engineer who is on the Indians' side and the daughter of the village doctor. Paramount.
- f EVERYBODY'S OLD MAN—Irvin S. Cobb, Rochelle Hudson, Norman Foster. Screen story by Edgar Franklin. Directed by James Flood. A familiar story (didn't Arliss do it once?) about how a millionaire, by concealing his identity, reforms the younger generation. For those who like Irvin S. Cobb as an actor. 20th Century-Fox.
- f FARMER IN THE DELL, THE—Fred Stone, Jean Parker. Novel by Phil Stong. Directed by Ben Holmes. A pleasant picture with plenty of humor, about a midwestern farmer whose wife insists upon moving to Hollywood to get their daughter into the movies. Instead the farmer himself is forced into a contract and his wife develops a swelled head. RKO-Radio.
- fj FOR THE SERVICE—Buck Jones. Screen story by Isadora Bernstein. Directed by Buck Jones. Story of the romantic West in the time of the Indian Wars. Universal.
- fj GENTLE JULIA — Jane Withers, Tom Brown, Jackie Searle, Marsha Hunt. Novel by Booth Tarkington. Directed by John Blystone. An inconsequential plot, about how an imp of a girl helped foil a villain's scheme to marry her aunt, made amusing by a series of Tarkingtonian kid episodes, some of them very funny. 20th Century-Fox.
- f HOUSE OF A THOUSAND CANDLES, THE—Phillips Holmes, Mae Clarke. Novel by Meredith Nicholson. Directed by Arthur Lubin. An interesting story of an international spy system which is operated from a gambling casino by means of a code radio broadcast. Republic.

(Continued on page 18)



# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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## Mr. Langdon Post Joins the Executive Committee

THIS is to announce the election of Mr. Langdon Post to the Executive Committee of the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures.

Mr. Post, a well-known figure in New York public life, was born April 10th, 1899, in New York City. His early education was at St. Marks School, Southborough, Massachusetts. He enlisted in the United States Regular Army in May 1917, and went across on the second convoy in August, serving throughout the war with the First Trench Mortar Battery, 1st Division, as Corporal. He was twice wounded and cited for gallantry. He was graduated from artillery school, Saumur, France, in February 1919, and was honorably discharged as Second Lieutenant in the Officers Reserve.

Upon his return he entered Harvard in 1919 and was graduated with the degree of A.B. His varied activities since that time have been such as to give him a wide knowledge and understanding. He worked in a factory in Newark and in the Oklahoma oil fields. He was reporter and dramatic critic on the New York Evening World for three years, including in his dramatic criticism the motion picture.

Mr. Post ran for the New York Assembly in 1927 and was defeated, but was elected in 1928, 1929, 1930 and 1931. After refusing the nomination by Tammany Hall in 1932, he ran independently and was defeated. In 1933 he was appointed Assistant Federal Emergency Relief Administrator and served in that capacity until nominated

by the Fusion Party for Borough President of Manhattan. He is at present Tenement House Commissioner of New York City, to



LANGDON POST

which position he was appointed in January 1934. He is Chairman of the New York City Housing Authority, and a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Housing Officials.

It is a distinct privilege and pleasure to have Mr. Post's interest in the affairs of the National Board of Review expressed through his membership on the directing body of the Board.

Mr. Post's address on the subject of censorship delivered at the recent Twenty-first Annual Luncheon of the National Board is printed on a following page of this magazine to further acquaint our readers with his active interest in the motion picture.

## Mrs. Grover Brings a Special Community Interest to the Executive Committee

A recent addition to the Executive Committee of the National Board of Review is Mrs. Harry G. Grover.

This membership comes after a contact with the Board dating back to 1923. That year marks Mrs. Grover's first active interest as a public spirited citizen in the motion picture in her town of Rutherford, New Jersey, a community suburban to New York City.



MRS. HARRY G. GROVER

One of the local Parent-Teacher Association organizations became concerned about the motion picture in relation to the school children and wanted to do something about it. It was slow work getting any program under way, but the next year Mrs. Grover became president of the Association and she turned talk into action.

She sought the National Board of Review to learn how its services might be applied to advantage in the community and soon putting the information secured into practice a Photoplay Guide to Selected Pictures was started, which has continued in the local newspaper ever since. She felt such a guide necessary for the use of those who wished

to be discriminating in their own and their children's picture attendance.

This thought in regard to children's attendance lead to the sponsorship of family weekend programs at the theatres, providing appropriate entertainment at a time when school children would and should be going to the movies. The family weekend program was then not as universal as it has become since so that this community might be said to have established somewhat of a record in the initiation and continuance of its selected family programs.

This work however did not continue with the Parent-Teacher Association interest alone but rather under Mrs. Grover's leadership was extended into a community Better Films Committee bringing together the many interests of the community into a constructive program.

Mrs. Grover worked for many years as President of this community Committee, at the same time continuing her Parent-Teacher Association offices, serving as President of the local P.-T. A. Council, and as Motion Picture Chairman of the Bergen County (N. J.) Council of P.-T. A.'s. She also has held the Motion Picture Chairmanship of the Rutherford Woman's Club. During all these years of motion picture activity she was called upon often for assistance in the organization of other groups patterned after the one functioning successfully under her presidency.

In answering these calls upon her Mrs. Grover managed to find time to respond without neglecting a very important home interest, that of four children, two boys and two girls. Talk to any of these young people and you will know that they grew up in an atmosphere of intelligent approach to the subject of motion pictures. The youngest is now an active member of the local junior Cinema Study Club putting her interest into activity as did her mother.

Mrs. Grover it is evident brings to the Executive Committee a knowledge of organized community motion picture activity gained from experience which is valuable to the Board.



# Censorship

By LANGDON POST

I don't know how many thousands of years ago it was that man first started to express himself, but it was at that time that the agitation for censorship began. I don't believe it is any greater or any less now than it was then. It generally operates in fits and starts, growing intense over some particular mode of expression of the day and dying out as that mode becomes more or less accepted in the minds and habits of the public. It is the form of censorship which we object to rather than censorship *per se*. We have all been brought up from the time we came into the world under one form of censorship or another. Our parents prohibited us from using certain words, from reading certain books, from doing various things which we might have liked to do, but which in the opinion of the parents were not good for us. Parental authority, parental discipline and parental upbringing are all a form of censorship to which we might have at times strenuously objected, but without which character is seldom built.

Now, I am an enemy of censorship as it is practised in many cities and states in this country. I acknowledge the fact that government itself is a form of censorship and in theory, of course, I don't like government, but we have got to have it and, therefore, the best we can do is get the best form of government that we can. I believe it is the function and duty of government to interest itself in the health of the people, in their well-being, in their morals and in their morale; it is the way in which it interests itself in these matters which we criticize, rather than the fact of the interest. For instance, we don't like the way Mussolini expresses this interest in Italy, or Hitler in Germany, or Stalin in Russia, but we must admit that the objectives of these men are fundamentally the same as the objectives of our own government.

Now, I don't like the way censorship of motion pictures is handled in those states

and cities in this country where it exists by law, but I do frankly acknowledge the right of government to prevent exhibitions, whether they be presented on a stage or on a screen, which are lewd or obscene or detrimental to the morale of the community. Every state and every government for many hundreds of years has accepted this philosophy and put it into effect in various ways. I object to the method of censorship in New York State and once introduced a bill in the Legislature to abolish it, because it is just plain silly. It operates under the State Board of Education and sits in blue-nosed glee judging pictures before the public even gets a chance to see them. The people who sit in judgment on these films are, in my opinion, incompetent and completely without ability to tell the people in this State what they shall and shall not see. It is perfectly obvious that what might be detrimental to one community would not be considered so in another. I am perfectly certain that rural communities of upstate New York would definitely object to some pictures which would be accepted without question in New York City, and this holds true throughout the country.

The minute a censorship bureau is set up in either a state or a city salaries begin to operate and a showing must be made. If every film were as pure as the driven snow the censorship board would nevertheless have to go to work with the scissors or else they might find themselves out of a job. This, of course, is not confined to censorship boards, for it operates in many other divisions of government. It is, however, one of the basic reasons why I am against this form of censorship. However, you might say, how about a censorship in communities such as city or county or any other political sub-division? Would it not be possible to have a censorship board which could reflect the wishes of units smaller than the state? The answer is that it would be less likely to

err in a smaller unit but nevertheless it would not work. Again you have the same trouble of trying to keep a job and again you have the situation of persons sitting in judgment before the public is permitted to judge for themselves. I should like to say, somewhat in passing, that it wouldn't make any difference who sat in judgment, it would still be wrong in my opinion. There is only one form of government censorship which should exist in a democratic country and which reflects the fundamental basis upon which this government is built. We have laws on the books in this and all the other states prohibiting exhibitions which are detrimental to the welfare of the community. We have district attorneys, who are charged with the prosecution of violations of these laws, and we have juries made up of the people in the community to pass judgment as to whether the exhibition is detrimental or not. These, in my opinion, are the people who should be the censors. Their jobs are not dependent upon a pair of scissors. They represent a cross-section of their community and can best judge the wishes and desires of that community. Before them comes the government official in defense of the law and the exhibitor to defend his position. The jury acts merely as a referee. If the exhibitor has guessed wrong as to the temper of the community he will come under the rigors of the law. If he can convince the community that his exhibition is not detrimental to the interests of the community he may continue his exhibition. The point is, however, that he is permitted his day in court, and that is never so under the form of censorship operating in such states as New York and Pennsylvania.

The type of review done by the National Board of Review is the only form of pre-public exhibition comment on motion pictures that should exist in this country. If we are going to have it at all. It is not a part of the law of the land; the exhibitors do not have to submit their films to it, and do so only by agreement, and it is a voluntary submission which is not a part of our statute. I, of course, can conceive of where in occasional instances even this kind of pre-comment might become restrictive, but I

certainly don't see how anyone in this democratic country can object to a group of citizens getting together and doing such work voluntarily. I may not agree with them, I may not agree with their decisions, but as long as they do not attempt to make their opinions the law of the land I certainly cannot see how I could question their right to action. It seems to me that the National Board of Review is based upon a correct and proper principle and I commend it for its stand against silly and stupid censorship laws which exist in this country.

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## New York Readers Please Attend

THE eighth annual bridge of the National Board of Review, under the auspices of the Membership Committee, will be held on the roof garden of the Hotel Pennsylvania, on Saturday, April 25th at 2 o'clock. Mrs. Oliver Harriman will be Chairman of the day and Mr. Sidney S. Lenz will be master of ceremonies.

There will be score prizes, door prizes, and table prizes. Among the prizes listed are a fur scarf; an Eastman Kodak; a basket of assorted liquors; a bottle of Caron's perfume; a hostess gown; a cut crystal cordial set; a fitted party bag; and a surprise prize donated by Mrs. Harriman. Also the motion picture companies are donating studio properties, notably among them a dress designed by Orry Kelly from Warner Brothers.

Stars of both the screen and stage will be present; tea will be served.

Tickets are \$1.50 each, \$6.00 a table. Men as well as women are cordially welcomed. Please apply at either the National Board office for tickets, or at the Hotel on the Saturday of the bridge. Don't forget the date: *April 25th.*

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# Relating Community Activities With a University Interest in Motion Pictures

By SAWYER FALK

*Mr. Falk is Professor of Drama at Syracuse University where in his capacity as instructor he teaches both by lecture and by giving his students an opportunity to learn through first hand experience in the University Theatre activity, which is described here as presented by Professor Falk at the Annual Conference of the National Board.*

AT the start I wish to disclaim originality or uniqueness for the theatre about which I am going to talk to you. Too often I have attended conventions at which some Little Jack Horner has said with a self-satisfied smile, "What a good boy am I." He has generally failed to realize that there have been many Christmas pies before his into which thumbs have been plunged with laudable conclusions.

However, I hope certain features of our project may merit your attention, bringing together as they do a university and its community in a theatre scheme which is fundamentally cultural.

But before you can fully understand what we are attempting to do you must be in sympathy with the major premise behind our attitude. We believe that a true theatre is a social manifestation and not a sheer money-making enterprise; it derives from the cultural yearnings of the community itself and is not foisted upon the people by theatre managers. On the front of our theatre building we have painted in bold letters: "A theatre project dedicated to the interests of Syracuse University and its community."

It is a fairly large theatre—having some 1600 seats—and in the past has housed in turn motion pictures, vaudeville, stock and burlesque troupes. It is located on the main street in the "theatre district," two miles from the University. We secured our lease after bidding against a burlesque impresario. The motion picture houses nearby have insisted that we are competing directly

with them; and to a degree they are right. So we have a regular theatre license just as they do. And we have labor problems just as they do, with stage hands unions and operators unions; because we insist on an open-shop policy. We are frequently picketed, a dubious distinction which I believe few universities or community theatres can share with us.

We have a box-office which must be self-sustaining since we have no subsidy other than the University's credit. In consequence, we must enter the fields of large scale exploitation and advertising. Of course we may call it "educational propaganda" or something equally as dignified or academic, but it is theatrical advertising none the less. Incidentally, it should be mentioned that we pay the same rates for newspaper advertising as do Keith's, Loew's, the Paramount and all the rest.

Moreover, for purely business reasons, we lease our films through a booking agent, to whom we pay a commission.

We differ from the other houses in that we are a non-profit-making organization without salary list. Our entire theatre (back-stage, the front of the house, the business offices) is managed by some 150 students. One of the ostensible reasons for operating the theatre is to give qualified students this experience.

I tell you these facts so that you may realize that though our purpose is cultural yet at the same time we are conducting a theatre experiment which hourly encounters the difficulties and problems that confront all the other theatres on the main street. We are not in the campus, sequestered and secure; there can not be anything cloistered or dilettante about our ideals. There we are in the arena of everyday theatrical activity where no quarter is given and none asked.

We have advanced beyond the status of

a "little theatre" with honor pins and buttons given for extra-curricular activity. We have aimed to establish a laboratory for the study, in an adult way, of a very definite social institution which daily affects the lives of millions of people. We believe it is a function of a university to conduct such a laboratory. We believe further, that a university should influence and be a part of (in so far as this is possible) the development of a concept for an American Theatre.

To carry out those beliefs we present a schedule made up of many items. First there are dramatic productions with student casts. These are given on the average of one a month and are for the most part, though not entirely, concerned with new plays which show or hint at the trends in American playwriting. Then, our Children's Theatre with its 200 or more youngsters ranging in age from five to fifteen, has its proper share of time. During the summer we conduct a semi-professional company which operates a stock policy. In the fourth place we try to encourage community drama by offering the theatre at a low rental to properly organized groups. Under this heading comes the lease we have negotiated with the Federal Theatre Project whereby the local W. P. A. stock company will have the use of our stage for certain days in the week in return for a good rental. A good rental is something to consider when one buys, as we do, thirty-five to forty tons of coal a month. In the fifth place, we are attempting to aid in the rehabilitation of the "road" by encouraging the booking of professional travelling companies into our theatre. This is important since the movie-palaces along the main street have usurped all the other stages and are reluctant to admit dramatic plays to them.

But the item of most particular interest to you on our program is the cinema project, so-called. It is upon this that I wish to dwell at some length. However, I have insisted upon pointing out the other items in our program in order to stress the fact that the cinema—which might seem all-important to some of you—is from our point of view only a part of what we are trying to make an integrated whole. It is an important part, it is true, and without the least condescension we have chosen to widen the scope and meaning of the word "Theatre"

to embrace this most modern of the arts. The drama is one art; the cinema another. Still they are both "Theatre." The rehabilitation of the American stage, as I have said on many occasions, depends on this recognition. The theatre of the future in communities such as ours will more and more demand that drama and cinema be under one roof.

Still our cinema project is only a part of the whole. We are not running a movie house with occasional stage performances; we are conducting a program which demands integration and subordination.

Here, then, we have a theatre fully equipped for talking pictures (talking apparatus leased from Western Electric) which is ours to deal with as we see fit. We do not have to barter with movie moguls for a place to offer our pictures at a time convenient to them. We do not have to ask a certain manager to bring a certain film to his house for our potential audience. We can schedule films when we want them for any length of run we want in the heart of the theatre district. We are free to pick by "spot booking" the kind of films we most desire. We can show them continuously from 11 A.M. to 11 P.M. or at any specified intervals during the day. In a word, we have a certain freedom of choice which is denied other organizations elsewhere whose aims are similar to ours. But freedom of choice is frequently a vexatious thing, especially if there happen to be certain tacit restrictions inherent in a situation, that one does not realize exist until they are well upon him.

How was I to know, for instance, when I booked *Chapayev* that the earth would rumble and shake under my feet? How was I to guess that the American Legion would protest so violently that the Mayor of the city and even the Governor of the State would be involved? All I wanted to show was the aesthetic and technical differences between the first and fourth periods of Russian cinematography.

But in view of that circumstance would it be prudent (call it good showmanship) for me to offer *The New Gulliver* to my people, even if I believe it's essential to their soul's good that they see it?

If we exhibit Emil Jannings in *The Making of a King* we will be picketed, as



sure as fate, by anti-Nazi delegations; if we show *The Youth of Maxim* we will be boycotted by ultra-patriotic organizations of which there are many in our district.

Or take a film that is outside the realm of politics—Dreyer's beautiful treatment of *The Passion of Joan of Arc*. To me this is one of the few true tragedies (in the Aristotelean sense of the word) that have been brought to the screen. It exalts and clarifies; it makes spiritual assertion. But the teacher of French did not think so. She threatened to protest to the French Ambassador at Washington. "It was bad enough," she asserted, "to give us Rene Clair a few weeks ago with his insults and jibes at French middle class living, but this film is positive sacrilege. It destroys for the students and town folk the concept of the maid as a beautiful blonde in flaming armor on a white charger and substitutes for it an ugly brunette with a shaved head" (As if any one could call Falconetti ugly!) . . . So the French teacher went out actively to campaign against the film and did much harm.

Or if these cases aren't difficult enough what would you do with Dr. Watson's beautiful film *Lot in Sodom*? It certainly should not be kept from an adult-minded audience but what about the phallic symbolism, the homosexuality, the incest — abstract and stylized as these items may be?

I cite these instances to draw your attention to the policy that one must pursue when he brings a cinema project to town and campus. Exactly what such a policy should be in all points I do not as yet know. I lack sufficient data to make arbitrary generalizations. However, I should like to call to your attention the three major considerations which govern the choice of films for our Civic-University Theatre.

It is our first business, as a university, to stress cultural values. Every film we choose, therefore, must without question have distinct artistic merit. Every film must reflect favorably upon the camera-screen device as a medium of aesthetic consequence. We reject absolutely the postulate of the box-office showman so adequately stated on many occasions by Mr. Cullman of Roxy's that the cinema is incapable of rising persistently to an artistic level. Many

American and foreign films disprove this challenge and assert beyond doubt that aesthetic considerations can and should enter into one's appraisal of films. We believe that an audience can be gathered for these films—an audience naturally smaller than the one which supports the "mass" films but an influential audience none the less. In our own case, in eight months time we have increased our potential audience from 300 to 2000 and at the same time have increased its capacity to absorb the type of film we offer it. It should be remarked that this audience is composed of college students, faculty members and their families, high school students, a certain segment of the townfolk trained in the arts, and last but not least in this reckoning, the man on the street.

For this audience—as the second point in the policy governing our selection of films—we avoid direct didacticism and educational method. It is true we do have a course in cinema appreciation at the University and try to make some of the observations and precepts taught there infiltrate into the general consciousness. For example, we send brief outlines to high school and club groups telling them in simple terms some of the elementary things about pictorialism, cinema dynamics, montage, etc., in an attempt to show how these elements contribute to a higher standard of the thing they most want—entertainment. The townspeople in the audience, with their lack of interest in "pure art" save us from the danger that overemphasis of this point of view might lead to. We are more concerned that our audience accept, let us say, the symphonic qualities of *Man of Aran* rather than leave the house debating the question of British Imperialism as it touches these islands. And we try to phrase our publicity so that it will lead to the point of view we have in mind. Our tendency at present—right or wrong as it may be—is to turn away from visual education *per se*.

We are conducting an off-campus laboratory wherein we wish to evaluate the potentialities of the cinema as an art-form by subjecting it to the test placed upon it by an actual theatre-going public. The impor-

ant field of visual education remains yet for us to explore.

Of course when I say emphatically that we have no "teaching purpose" I am wrong. Every time we flash something new or different on our screen we are in a sense doing an educational work.

Besides, we do try by the correlation of stage and screen presentations to offer what might be called "a body of information." This year, for example, we are attempting (without saying too much about it to the general public, although inferring it to our own student body in our advertising)—we are attempting to deal with the problems of pre-adulthood. We plan to offer *La Maternelle*, *Maedchen in Uniform*, and *The Road to Life*. On the stage we have already given a performance of *Birthday*—a play that deals with the adjustment of a sixteen-year-old girl to the idea of her mother's re-marriage. (Incidentally, we used in the production a fourteen-year-old girl and a sixteen-year-old girl, both of whom had been trained in our Children's Theatre.) We should also like to add to this list, schedule permitting, Albert Bein's play about reform school boys—*Little Ol' Boy*. And if conditions were ideal—which they are certainly not—we would like to bring *Dead End*, stupendous set and all, to our stage. Then we'd have a well-rounded program.

And as a body of information last year we gave our audience *Potemkin* and *Chapayev* on the screen and Afinogenov's play of Soviet ideology *Fear* on the stage in order to afford a composite picture of the Soviet state of mind.

Nor do we neglect that part of education which learns by doing; we are interested in the creative side of the cinema. We are anxious to buttress our appreciation by a better understanding of the artistic and technical problems of film-making. As far back as 1928 we made a full-length film in 35 mm. stock. This was shown for a week in one of the commercial houses as part of a double-feature bill; Clara Bow was the other half. At present we are planning to make a full-length talking picture during the summer. The scenario for this is being prepared by Lynn Riggs, author of the cur-

rent New York play, *Russet Mantle*. This creative work is entirely experimental, non-commercial and quite near in some respects to personal cinema-making.

And while on the subject of education let me say something about our policy as it affects children's films. This work has only recently received our attention and in consequence our deductions are somewhat inconclusive. We do feel, however, that the children's tastes and opinions should guide us, and that we should not force adult assumptions about what a child needs upon them. Only recently on a special children's program—shown for two days from 10:30 A.M. to 5:30 P.M.—we presented a Musical Mood, *Fingal's Cave* at the request of the Parent-Teacher Association. For it was the feeling of this group that some worthwhile music as such should be offered to counterbalance the variety of music, good, bad and indifferent, that was incidental to the cartoon films, the informationals and the comedies. You perhaps have seen the film; it tries—and in a measure succeeds—to correlate the restless movement of the sea with the haunting Mendelssohn music. My eleven-year-old boy described it as "pretty bad." Now, is it really fair to insist that he like it? I wonder.

Or should children be urged to attend certain motion pictures for ulterior reasons—for example, the avowed purpose of encouraging them to read such and such an English classic before or after viewing the film? I don't think so. I don't quite see the pertinence of the argument that says a film like *The Tale of Two Cities* is a good film because it makes the youngster rush to the Dickens original. There's something false in the aesthetic assumption involved whether the film-goer be adult or child.

Likewise, I am not sure that it's a good practice to encourage attendance upon films because they teach a lesson or preach a golden text. I want my boy and girl to enjoy the movies on their own merits and not as Sunday School lessons. It seems to me that this practice of the school-mam will kill off an interest in films just as surely as the habit of vivisectioning Shakespeare, simile by simile, purple passage by purple passage, has ruined many a child's ap-



preciation of that glorious body of drama.

But I offer these comments merely as random suppositions. We must experiment a great deal before we will be sure of conclusions. So we continue to analyze the kind of program, the length of program; the comparative value of a single showing as opposed to a continuous showing; the relative merits of a program of shorts as contrasted with a feature picture and shorts; and, the question of the lowest possible admission fee which we believe should be ten cents and if possible five. Because of the availability of our Children's Theatre we are experimenting with combination programs, i.e., programs which bring together, let us say for illustration, a half or three-quarters of an hour stage play acted by children and one or more films. We believe that in such a combination we are going to find the ideal program.

Now to return again to our policy and the adult theatre. The third point that governs our choice of films—along with the stress on the cultural and an avoidance of the didactic—is our desire to encourage a “free screen” in much the same way that we have a “free stage.” As a university interested in the cause of essential truth we do not want a censored or restricted screen. We believe as well-bred citizens we have taste and discrimination and we resent the dictation of groups either from the Left Wing or from the Right. We believe it is a fundamental in the credo of true Americanism to evaluate intellectually and emotionally attitudes, moods and points of view which are different from ours. But, at the same time, we keep on insisting that these attitudes, moods and points of view must have some artistic justification. If this essential artistry be lacking no matter how valid the cause nor how cogent the argument, we are not interested.

I have already cited instances to show the difficulties we face as we pursue our policy of “a free screen” in these troublesome times. Of course as practising showmen we must necessarily avoid deliberate controversy; it is better not to arouse, intentionally, any sleeping dogs.

On the other hand, it is impossible for us

to submit to the conditions which the commercial houses must of necessity follow. It is part of our function as a vital theatre to arouse, disturb and frequently aggravate an audience. For a university theatre to follow slavishly at all times the “accepted and approved” is a sign of impotence. Moreover, we should strive to make our audience as internationally minded as possible. We detest the smug chauvinism of our local Hearst paper which said in substance, “There is no need to bring foreign films to Syracuse. There are plenty of good American ones.” . . . It is just because the commercial theatres are definitely conditioned by this type of reasoning that we feel obligated to exhibit foreign films. It is, briefly, our responsibility to bring to our community worth while cinema that the other houses will not or dare not (for box-office and other reasons) bring. The films they present we have no interest in presenting—nor any reason for presenting.

And still these same commercial theatres cry “Competition.” We are not wittingly competing with them; we are offering items which they have for years denied our university community. We are fostering a social need by taking the situation into our own hands.

And furthermore we hope, by force of opinion, to change eventually some current trade practices. We hope to show that certain films of merit are “good box-office.” We hope to break down the double-feature policy. We hope to discourage the “road-showing” (so-called) of films at exorbitant prices (\$1.65 is too much to charge for any film, any time, anywhere, Max Reinhardt or no Max Reinhardt). We hope to express our disapproval of block booking. We hope to encourage a better advertising of commendable “short” subjects. We will use our opinion against Monte Carlo, Banko, Screeno, free chinaware, free turkeys, free groceries. In a word, we will fight with and against the theatre managers for a better theatre. It will be a long fight and a hard one and we are going to suffer innumerable bruises. We have a job on our hands; but as Mattie in the play *Ethan Frome* says, “That’s a very interesting thing to think about.”

# Once More the Scapegoat

THE title of this book—"The Movies on Trial"—is one more indication of an attitude that is getting as passé as it is, and always has been, silly. People might get together and hold a discussion under the slogan "The Printing Press on Trial," or "Grand Opera on Trial," or "The Saxophone on Trial," and it would be just as sensible. For it is not "movies" that are being debated in this book, but particular examples of movies, or what some individual thinks movies are or ought to be. Very few of the debaters seem to have much idea of what the motion picture is except in the form of a few specific films.

Moreover, who is to do the "trying," and whence comes their authority to sit in judgment and pass sentence? And how, if by some miracle they should agree, is their sentence to be executed? For movies are not going to be sent to jail, or Devil's Island, or excommunicated, any more than the newspaper is, or the jazz band.

The lamentable fact is that the motion picture is still the convenient scapegoat for people who must find a definite and easily accessible thing to pile the blame on when they are troubled by what they feel are the evils in life. What they forget is that the movies, like countless other things, are mere surface manifestations of something much deeper. If they want to get down to essentials they should have a symposium on "Human Nature on Trial." And then what?

Any serious discussion of the motion picture by competent people is interesting and important, and there are interesting and important things in this book. Most of them will not be new to anyone who has attended the annual conferences of the National Board, but it is a good thing to have them where they can be read, and in some cases, re-read.

The most valuable articles are those by Judge Lindsey, Gabriela Mistral, Upton Sinclair and Rabbi Goldstein. Judge Lindsey's long experience has given him, along with his native common sense, the right to

speak with authority on "The Movies and Juvenile Delinquency," and in connection with this W. E. Blatz's article on "What Do the Children Think of the Movies?" has considerable point. Rabbi Goldstein's "The Motion Picture and Social Control" is a sensible and provocative, and certainly not narrow, discussion of how to keep movies from being socially harmful. With all his accuracy, however, the author's knowledge of the National Board of Review seems to be limited to its reviewing, which he considers futile; he appears not to know that the Better Films Councils, which he thinks useful, were the creation of the National Board and project socially its review work. Upton Sinclair's ideas on "The Movies and Political Propaganda" are derived from bitter experience, and though his tone is not bitter what he says forebodes something not pleasant to contemplate, but something that cries for serious contemplation.

Gabriela Mistral, in "The Poet's Attitude Toward the Movies," is the only one with anything important to say about the motion picture as a form of artistic expression. Seymour Stern writes vigorously, and with one of his "plans," about "The Bankruptcy of Cinema as Art," but it is hard to make out what he means by art. His list of favored films contains so much—important, trivial, real art and tripe—that the only possible canon to infer from his judgments is that to be art a film should have been made twenty years ago (in Russia ten years ago) or by D. W. Griffith.

The rest of the book is filled with personal opinions and feelings, some of them pleasant to read about, some very odd, and none of them much concerned with what the motion picture really is. The apex in futility is reached by William Lyon Phelps in "Stories I'd Like to See Screened."—J. S. H.

*The Movies on Trial.* Compiled and edited by William J. Perlman; published by Macmillan; Price, \$2.50.



# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS

## DEPARTMENT

*This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of Exceptional and Honorable*

*Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.*

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

### COMMITTEE

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## Three Women

*Written and directed by L. Arnshtam; photographed by V. Rappoport and A. Shafran; musical score by Dmitri Shostakovich; supervised by S. Yutkevitch; produced by Lenfilm; distributed by Amkino.*

### The cast

Asya .....	Yanina Jeimo
Asya as a child .....	Yanina Jeimo
Zoya .....	Z. Fedorova
Zoya as a child .....	I. Antipova
Natasha .....	I. Zarubina
Natasha as a child .....	D. Pape
Senka .....	Boris Chirkov
Senka as a child .....	N. Markov
Andrei .....	Boris Babochkin
Silich .....	Boris Poslavsky
Grandmother .....	M. Blumenthal-Tamarina
Her daughter .....	Vera Popova

THIS film is a blend of the familiar revolutionary theme with what is Americanly known as heart interest and sob-stuff. For near three quarters of the picture the blend is a highly effective one. The extraordinary Russian gift for projecting three-dimensional, flesh-and-blood people upon the screen keeps a sense of reality alive in the story even after the plot has betaken itself to ways and devices that countless melodramas made trite long ago.

The magic "three", with which Dumas and Kipling showed so many imitators how to make stirring tales of comradeship and soldierly valor, here serves once more with its traditional potency, but with heroines instead of heroes. Three girls are followed from their childhood into the revolution, in which their part, with Red Cross bands on their arms, is to stick close to the fighting and care for the wounded.

Not since *Mother* has a Russian film gone so intimately into the homes of the poor and shown in the misery of the women how inevitable it was that revolution should burst out under the old regime. The three ragged little playmates, unquenchably children in their songs and games amid the bewildering sufferings of their elders, point up as poignantly as anything could how the natural instincts of human life to grow to some blooming of beauty and joy were inescapably starved and killed by harsh and impoverished conditions of living. These children are not cute or pretty, parading childish charms to elicit adoring "Ohs" and "Ahs" from comfortable theatre patrons—they are intensely human, going about their childhood businesses as naturally as if there were no camera within miles of them—or as if they had never heard of a camera. It is all handled with no heavy finger pointing and signifying "This is what I mean" and "This is the thing I am preaching about." Mostly by implication, telling of the general through the particular, giving human meaning to the masses by revelations in the individual, the first part of this film is another step forward in the Russian method.

While the girls are children, and for a little while after they are grown enough to take their part in the revolt, the film is thoroughly alive and deeply moving—not heavy or too sombrely gruesome but lightened by a remarkably tender understanding of childhood and feelings about childhood. The last part, with its conventional fighting episodes, its stock figures of villainous enemies, its pathetic but theatrical death scene, is effective but on a distinctly lower

level. In fact it is effective only because of the sympathy for the characters that carries over from the earlier part.

*Three Women* seems likely to have a stronger appeal for American audiences than most Russian films because its story interest is so universal and the element that is called propaganda is so comparatively un-insistent. The cast abounds in excellent actors—the three men, Babochkin of *Chapayev*, Chirkov of *The Youth of Maxim* and Poslavsky of *Peasants*, are a trio that in a land of stars would have a name value something like a combination of Gable, Cagney and Arliss all in one picture (which is not to imply that they are in the least like the American favorites). The women, not familiar in this country, are just as good.

—J. S. H.

## The Miracle of the Age

IT would be rather naive not to expect that a movie contrived to cash in on the public interest in the Dionne quintuplets would be pretty much a hackwork affair, with cuteness as its chief attraction. But *The Country Doctor* turns out to be quite a different matter. The story of the general medical practitioner in a remote Canadian lumber village, caring for the lives of the humble townspeople without any of the help of modern medical equipment, is as heroic and important in its essentials as *The Story of Louis Pasteur*. It needed no quintuplets to give it importance, or to emphasize its heroism, and as it comes to the screen, though it makes concessions to mass taste by some standardized sure-fire comedy and villainies, it is a warmly genuine record of something admirable and stirring, a tribute to many an unsung hero.

But no other country doctor has had such a happy ending to his struggles as this one. After all his vain efforts to get a hospital and adequate assistance in his work (and it is while his efforts are vain that he is typical) the truth that is stranger than fiction provides a miracle which makes his dreams come true—the successful bringing into the world of quintuplets stirs the wonder of all

mankind, money comes pouring in, and for once life comes out like a fairy tale.

A lot of effective writing, directing and acting has gone into this picture, and it is one of the happy surprises of the season. To top it all, the babies are delightful fairy godmothers.—J. S. H.

## High-Comedy Glamor

IT is good news that Marlene Dietrich appears, in *Desire*, to be recovering from the disease of pastel posturing that has afflicted her more recent pictures. In a fairly hammy plot about a lovely jewel thief who uses an unsophisticated American engineer, on a European vacation, to further her plans for getting away with the necklace, she comes back in a part that has something of the mysterious allurements of the Dietrich of *Morocco*. Along with Gary Cooper.

Though the story is pretty ancient in its general outline, with occasional intimations that it may revive the *Man from Home* theme (simple rugged American proving nobler than Europe's noblest), it is embroidered with episodes and details full of delightful comedy. As a matter of fact the same story has been done more than once in Europe, with more accent on the romance and melodrama. Under Lubitsch's supervision the Paramount version is satisfied to go for several reels to the tune of pure comedy, with romance of the most gossamer variety glinting through occasionally. Which makes slick and highly pleasant entertainment. But instead of leaving it at that, with Gary Cooper learning about women from the charming jewel-stealer and then going on his way, it appears to have been decided that the episode should have a forever-after ending, and to make such an ending properly standardized the lovely thief has been rather sketchily whitewashed and made to give the impression that she will be a good girl and go to jail for a while before settling down to married life in Detroit. Which, beside being entirely unconvincing, throws the last reel or two quite out of harmony with the rest. But the good news is still good news.

—J. S. H.



# The Young Reviewers Have a Session

THE young people conducted a session of the Annual Conference of the National Board of Review giving them the opportunity to discuss the motion picture without any adult supervision or stimulus. As last year it was most successful and advantageous, both for the participants and the interested adults in the audience.

Robert Adams, Jr., a 16 year old student of the Birch Wathen School, in New York City, presided over this one day Conference devoted to talks, prepared on subjects of their own selection by the boys and girls, and to reports of activities from the clubs affiliated with the National Association of 4-Star Clubs, an organization which grew out of the National Board's sponsored Young Reviewers, which has been functioning for the past six years as a motion picture discussion group of some 500 boys and girls from 8 to 16 years of age in the metropolitan New York area.

We believe that our readers, as our Conference delegates did, will find something of interest in these young people's ideas so we are quoting from a number of the talks:

Fred Galbraith, Jr. (age 16) of the Rutherford (N. J.) Junior Better Films Club, a boys' group, had the following to say regarding "The Change from the Fan Attitude":

"A great many people have asked me just exactly what is the benefit that you get out of this Young Reviewers business. They don't exactly understand what happens more than our seeing free pictures. (Of course, that is a great incentive to a lot of them.) They don't know exactly what has happened when we have seen these pictures and discussed them from the Young Reviewers standpoint.

"The main change, the one I would like to discuss, is what is known as a change from the fan attitude. I was one of those creatures myself last year. I had a fan attitude. It is a rather bad thing to have, particularly if someone like our director is around because that is her pet hate. I was made the

goat of last year's Conference because I got up and raved about Claudette Colbert and much as I like her now, I can criticize her intelligently. I will go and see any picture she is in but when I have seen it I will try and judge it from the standards I have learned. With those things in mind I try to see what can be improved to make these pictures better.

"Now my opinion of a good picture is one where none of those things are brought to your mind, that is to say, you aren't conscious of the fact that it has been specifically directed to some end, or the acting being done as acting. If you are able to criticize, to look for faults in directing and acting and so forth, and any of these faults are apparent, then the picture is not good. However, if bearing this point in mind none of them are evident, then it is quite obvious that the picture is so well made that only the story is put over. It is entertainment and instructional value and nothing else. I would like to give an example. I was fortunate enough to see *The Story of Louis Pasteur*. That picture was so simple, so direct, so excellently told that afterwards when there was a discussion, thinking it over in my mind, I had to look back and try and pick out certain parts of it, certain angles. They didn't stand out in my mind. I had been seeing Louis Pasteur—I had not been seeing a man acting Louis Pasteur. I couldn't picture some director on the sidelines waving his hands around and trying to get the direction better. It was so natural, so well put over that I didn't think of these things.

"In closing I would like to quote one of the speakers I heard at a session of this National Board's Conference. He started out as a Young Reviewer. He is working towards a position as a critic. He used a phrase that I think is very apt for the consumer of a picture, the ultimate consumer which is the person who just goes to see a picture. He is not necessarily a Young Reviewer. In time we hope they will all be young review-

ers or old reviewers. A phrase he used was 'between unconsidered enjoyment and critical perception.' He meant he was in the stage starting out at unconsidered enjoyment and progressing toward critical perception. I believe that this phrase expresses the proper attitude for your consumer-reviewer. Any person who can enjoy the picture and at the same time criticize it intelligently has really known the picture. I give that phrase again 'between unconsidered enjoyment and critical perception' and I submit that as a perfect consumer-reviewer attitude."

A young miss of 12, Mitzi Hochstadt, said she had a few comments to get "off her chest": "In all the years motion pictures have been in production and have become such world-wide entertainment, they still haven't reached perfection.

"Acting is one of the most important factors in the making of a picture. Have you ever seen Marlene Dietrich portray emotion without her eyes and mouth wide open? I've always had the feeling she suffered from some nasal trouble. Joan Bennett, on the other hand, doesn't even do that. In any scene, regardless of what sort of acting it may require, she merely succeeds in looking pretty, that's all. Then again, there's over-acting to be considered. The new child actress Sybil Jason overacted terribly in a scene from the picture *I Found Stella Parish*. In this scene she asks for her mother but she does it in such a way and makes such grimaces it makes one think of a much older actress doing the same scene and then having this child imitate her.

"These faults eventually have to be covered up by something that will divert your attention from them. All of Joan Crawford's pictures are of the same type but for one moment of suspense every now and then when Miss Crawford makes one of her grand entrances in one of her creations. You cannot help feeling on edge wondering whether or not she will poke someone's eye out with her exaggerated collar or trip over some fancy fuzzy at the bottom of her skirt.

"Producers are forever endeavoring to find new ways of holding the public's interest—so now we have color in films. Color

films are beautiful, in fact so beautiful that the color of the film holds your attention more than the story. I remember one scene in the picture *Becky Sharp*, between Miriam Hopkins and Frances Dee. The scene was intended to be a sorrowful one but to me it wasn't. I was more thrilled and so were the people around me (judging from the comments) at the gorgeous coloring of the gown worn by Miss Dee. Perhaps when the public has grown more accustomed to color in films, they will fully appreciate motion pictures for what they really are.

"Of course this is only one girl's opinion."

Anne Gillette (age 16), President of the East Orange (N. J.) Cinematography Club reported that since last year "we have practically doubled our enrollment and are organized as a regular 8th period assignment so this year members receive academic credit for their work. We prepare reviews of the current showings for the use of the school. This year we have financed our activities by means of a movie benefit and we are trying to raise money enough to obtain a projector and camera to take movies of our school activities and so obtain a practical knowledge of making motion pictures, and also exhibit educational films throughout the school when a teacher desires them."

Louis Halk (age 12) of the State Street Junior High School Photoplay Club of Hackensack (N. J.) said that although they were only a few months old they had found everyone most willing to cooperate with them. "The theatre managers invited our entire club to be their guests for a performance and after that each member has been admitted for a small sum. During the first part of the term we studied pictures we had seen, outstanding characters and music in the movies. And this term we plan to study the camera, visit projection rooms and learn more of the mechanics of the movies. Our chief aim has been to have the members of the club think about the movies. It wasn't so much what they thought but that they really *did* think, that was important."

Robert Marsoline (age 17) gave a fine resume of the work of the Central High School Photoplay Club of Newark (N. J.).



"Shooting scenes of a football game or a gymnasium drill are not something novel for our Club. Moving pictures of current school events are taken every week, all of the shots are put together to form a news-reel which is shown to the assembly in the auditorium. We edit, title, and project our own movies. Every department in the school benefits by the Photoplay Club. In the Technical Department alone the Club photographed the entire making of a band-saw; in the Woodworking Rooms the making of an end-table; and in the Library several scenes of its work. The Photoplay Club is working with the city of Newark in two of its major projects—the filming of scenes in urging the public to contribute to the Community Chest; and also several scenes showing the need for careful driving. The Amateur Cine World of London, England, has made contact with our Club asking us to photograph the Mayor of Newark's radio broadcast opening up a pageant in Newark, England."

Doris Gremmel (age 16), President of the Rutherford (N. J.) Cinema Club, one of the pioneer young people's clubs made an interesting announcement, "We have made a very progressive step this year. The program and study course of our work is going to be taught in school, daily for six consecutive weeks as part of Sophomore English, and the Junior Better Films Club and the Cinema Club will disband as such in order to reorganize together as one group to do project work parallel to the study course. In this way, working with both directors, the English teacher and the principal, every high school student will have a chance to study about movies, instead of a limited number as in the present clubs, and the field of club activity will be greatly enlarged."

Present and future club sponsors may like to read the requirements for such as enumerated by Hyman Zagon of the recently formed Hamilton Reviewers of the Alexander Hamilton High School of Brooklyn (N. Y.): "In general, we sought a faculty advisor with the following qualifications: first, the person had to be interested, even

enthusiastic about the idea, and willing to make certain sacrifices in time and energy for the club. The person had to possess a keen interest in motion pictures, and have a literary and educational background that would equip her or him to lead intelligent discussions of the relative merits of photoplays. Secondly, the advisor had to be a teacher well liked by the student body of the school in order to secure the best in ability and cooperation from the members. Finally, we wanted a progressive modern teacher, no die-hard, old-fashioned faculty advisor for us. We wanted someone who would keep in touch with modern development and not a strait-laced strict pedagogue of the old school." (Note—this paragon of a sponsor was found!)

Sidney Sitrer (age 12) reported for the Motion Picture Study Club of Elijah Clarke Junior High School, New York City, a group of boys much younger than the Hamilton Reviewers, who likewise expressed great satisfaction with their sponsor, "Our aim is to promote a greater appreciation of finer films and since our organization in September, 1935, we have become more adept in our discussions and in our ability to distinguish good pictures from bad ones. This club is limited to 9th year pupils so when you realize that out of a possible 300, 200 applied for the movie club it shows the popularity we have obtained. We have been able to promote a greater interest among the entire school and the pupils' parents for the better appreciation of motion pictures, with the aid of mouth-to-mouth conversation. The club member sees a picture and tells of what he saw to his parents. His parents discuss it and pass their judgment on among the members of society that they belong to. Thus everyone becomes interested."

There were 22 clubs with delegates reporting and 17 special topic speakers and we are sorry we cannot include them all. But further information regarding the Conference session, the general activity of the Young Reviewers and the Photoplay Clubs can be secured by writing to the National Board of Review.

## Selected Pictures Guide

(Continued from page 2)

- fj **KING OF THE PECOS, THE**—John Wayne, Muriel Evans. Screen story by Bernard McConville. Directed by Joseph Kane. A well-done tale of Texas in the early cattle days, and a land-grabber trying to wipe out the independent cattle men. Not one of the wild and woolly pictures—not a bar-room in it—but a pretty fair glimpse of a stirring period in our past. Republic.
- f **LAUGHING IRISH EYES**—Phil Regan, Walter C. Kelly, Evalyn Knapp. Screen story by Sidney Sutherland and Wallace Sullivan. Directed by Joseph Santley. Pleasant comedy of an Irish tenor brought to America to be a prize-fighter. Phil Regan an attractive hero with a good voice—and J. M. Kerrigan contributes his matchless brogue. Republic.
- fj **\*LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY**—Freddie Bartholomew, C. Aubrey Smith, Dolores Costello. Novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett. Directed by John Cromwell. The childhood favorite about the Brooklyn boy who inherited an English title and went back to become a Lord, patching up the quarrel between his grandfather and mother and eventually attracting his friends, a grocer and a boot-black, to the charms of the English aristocracy. Without curls and velvet suits, the boy comes closer to present day youngsters. Suggested for schools and libraries. United Artists.
- f **MOONLIGHT MURDER**—Chester Morris, Leo Carrillo, Madge Evans. Screen story by Albert J. Cohen and Robert T. Shannon. Directed by Edward L. Marin. A mysterious death during an opera in the Hollywood Bowl, and a surprising explanation of it. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f **PETTICOAT FEVER**—Myrna Loy, Robert Montgomery, Reginald Owen. Play by Mark Reed. Directed by George Fitzmaurice. Bright and highly diverting comedy about what happened when a charming young woman landed by accident in Labrador where an isolated young man kept a wireless station. The stars are particularly happy in congenial parts. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f **\*ROBIN HOOD OF EL DORADO**—Warner Baxter, Margo, Ann Loring, Bruce Cabot. Novel by Walter Noble Burns. Directed by William A. Wellman. Colorful and exciting story of early California when the discovery of gold brought white adventurers to drive the Mexicans from their homes. Romantic and stirring, and beautifully directed, as well as shedding a useful light on our history. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f **SINGING KID, THE**—Al Jolson, Beverly Roberts. Screen story by Robert Lord. Directed by William Keighly. A fast-moving, peppy musical show. A singer jilted by his fiancée, loses his voice and retires to the country with his gag men and there meets the girl of his dreams. Edward Everett Horton and Allen Jenkins as the gag men are highly amusing and the songs are catchy. First National.
- j **SKY PARADE**—Jimmie Allen, William Gargan. Screen story by Byron Morgan. Directed by Otho Lovering. Based on the radio feature "The Air Adventures of Jimmie Allen" this picture will prove entertaining for the young people with its thrilling air scenes. A note of interest is the brief resume of aviation history from 1914 to the present. Paramount.
- f **SUTTER'S GOLD**—Edward Arnold, Lee Tracy, Binnie Barnes. Based on novel by Blaise Cendrars. Directed by James Cruze. A dramatic and unconvincing biography of John Sutter. His ruthless desertion of his wife and children, his rise to wealth and power, and finally his death as a poor, broken old man leaves the spectator strangely unmoved. Though the story is thrilling and exciting in parts, it is on the whole confusing. Universal.
- m **\*THESE THREE**—Miriam Hopkins, Merle Oberon, Joel McCrea. Screen story by Lillian Hellman. Directed by William Wyler. Two girls just out of college starting a school, and a young doctor who is their friend. The devastation caused in their lives by the malicious lies of a little girl. A fine production, beautifully acted, and an absorbing story. United Artists.
- f **THIRTEEN HOURS BY AIR**—Fred MacMurray, Joan Bennett. Screen story by Bogart Rogers and Frank Dazey. Directed by Mitchell Leisen. A romantic story of the adventures of passengers aboard a speeding transcontinental plane, with plenty of thrills and excitement. A well directed production with excellent photography. Paramount.
- f **THREE GODFATHERS**—Chester Morris, Lewis Stone, Walter Brennan. Novel by Peter B. Kyne. Directed by Richard Boleslawsky. Western made different by its style of direction and general handling, about three bad men who found a baby in the desert, and what the accident made in their characters. Little of the usual hullabaloo and fast action, which makes it slower than customary, but interesting for unusual qualities. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- j **TOO MANY PARENTS**—Frances Farmer, Colin Tapley. Based on short stories by Jesse Lynch Williams and George Templeton. Directed by Robert F. McGowan. Story of life at a boys' military school. A rather weak plot but the acting of the boys is excellent. Paramount.



- fj TWO IN REVOLT—John Arledge, Louise Latimer. Screen story by Earl Johnson and Thomas Storey. Directed by Glenn Tryon. A horse, dog and love story—one of the most satisfactory of its kind. Alive and likeable all the way through. RKO-Radio.

## SHORT SUBJECTS

### INFORMATIONALS

- fj AIR HOPPERS—Excellent short about gliders. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj CHERRY BLOSSOM TIME IN JAPAN—Lovely to look at, in color, and revealing likeable qualities in the Japanese. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj DAY'S JOURNEY, A—Interesting glimpses of unusual Americans—Iradians, Chinese, House of David members, somewhat spoiled by feeble wisecracks. Vitaphone.
- fj GOING PLACES NO. 18—Mystery of cartoonland explained. Universal.
- f GOING PLACES NOS. 19-20—Use of airplanes in New Guinea; trip to Havana. Universal.
- f HIT AND RUN DRIVER—Best so far of the Crime Does Not Pay Series—an effective dramatization of one of the great dangers of present-day life. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f MARCH OF TIME NO. 3 (1936 Series)—French Guiana's prison system, Devil's Island; recent military revolt in Japan (mostly through comment); and the present state of fisheries in New England. RKO-Radio.
- fj MODERN TOKYO—Interesting Fitzpatrick Traveltalk. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 9—Studying wild birds; natives fishing with huge butterfly nets; 5 composers playing "Swanee River" in their particular style. Paramount.
- f PATHE TOPICS NO. 4—Chemists helping the farmers; Alpine winter scenes; comic story by Gene Lockhart. RKO-Radio.
- f POPULAR SCIENCE NO. 4—Testing earthquake effects on skyscrapers; gadgets for cooking; caterpillar to a butterfly; advantages of the x-ray for surgery. Paramount.
- f PROMINENT PERSONALITIES—Interesting bits about people not well-known—LeRoy, the football coach and lawyer; Miss Ritchie, the first government commercial aviatrix; Grisca Goluboff, violin prodigy and all-around boy; Margaret Bourke-White, the photographer. RKO-Radio.
- fj SACRED CITY OF THE MAYAN INDIANS, THE—Good travelogue in color. Suggested for schools and libraries. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f STOP, LOOK AND GUESS—A guessing game, unusual and interesting—picking out famous athletic champions by first seeing only their eyes. Columbia.
- f STRANGER THAN FICTION NOS. 18-19—Strange house; China's tidal wave; making gold leaf; sky ferry; catching wild cats; etc. Universal.
- f SUN CHASERS—Sports in warm and sunny climes. Paramount.
- f THRILLS WITH DAREDEVILS—Lot of death-defying stunts. Columbia.
- f VICTORIA AND VANCOUVER—Interesting travelogue in color. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj LITTLE STRANGER, THE—Amusing, showing the Ugly Duckling in reverse. Paramount.
- fj \*MICKEY'S GRAND OPERA (Mickey Mouse)—Pluto and a Magic Hat interrupt a grand opera in which Donald Duck and Madame Cluck are starring. Very funny. United Artists.
- f MISS GLORY—Novel and clever dream episode. Vitaphone.
- fj ORPHAN'S PICNIC (Mickey Mouse)—Donald Duck has a lot of trouble trying to give a good time to Mickey's proteges. United Artists.

### COMEDIES, MUSICALS, NOVELTIES AND SERIALS

- f BROADWAY HIGHLIGHTS NO. 6—Intimate views of the Gay White Way and its frequenters. Paramount.
- j EARKEST AFRICA (Serial) NOS. 5-10—Further adventures of Clyde Beatty. Republic.
- f JOLLY COBURN—And his band, including some unusual electrical instruments. Vitaphone.
- fj LUCKY CORNER, THE—Our Gang creates business for a lemonade stand. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj PINCH SINGER, THE—Our Gang with Alfalfa substituting for Dora in a singing contest. Funny. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f PLAYING FOR FUN—Singing and dancing revue. Universal.
- f RED NICHOLS AND HIS WORLD FAMOUS PENNIES—Orchestra music and singing. Vitaphone.
- f SCREEN SNAPSHOTS NOS. 7-8—Hollywood stars and their recreations. Columbia.
- fj SHORTY AT CONEY ISLAND—Amusing antics of a chimpanzee visiting Coney Island and the swell time he has doing stunts. Paramount.
- f SLEEPY TIME—An amusing little story about a colored baby being sung to sleep every night by Ruth Etting over the radio. RKO-Radio.
- f SLIDE NELLY SLIDE—Herman Bing with his high blood pressure betting on a team of girl soft-ball players. Vitaphone.
- f SWING IT—Louis Prima and his amusing "hot" little band from New Orleans. Very good for those who like this kind of specialty. RKO-Radio.
- f THRILL FOR THELMA, A (Crime Does Not Pay Series)—About a girl whose hunger for excitement and easy money got her into prison. Interesting and well done. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj TROUBLE IN TOYLAND—Children entertainers. Vitaphone.
- f VAMP TILL READY—Charlie Chase's wife has a twin sister—hence comic complications. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f WEDTIME STORY, A—An amusing skit with a novel idea, in which Lew Fields is up against his young lawyer son's legal knowledge. RKO-Radio.

## The Film Year Book

"BIGGER and Better Than Ever," might be said of the 1936 Film Daily Year Book, the eighteenth annual edition. For it is bigger, numbering over 1200 pages as compared to some 1000 last year. There are a number of new entries in the index showing new subjects treated. And as to its being better that will be learned continually throughout the year as it answers innumerable questions and proves itself an ever-ready and complete reference book on the motion picture from all angles. Edited by Jack Alicoate and published by the Film Daily, New York City.

### CARTOONS

- j BEAUTY SHOPPE (Oswald the Lucky Rabbit)—Three monkeys have fun in a waldy parlor. Universal.
- fj BETTY BOOP AND LITTLE JIMMIE—Betty having reduced to skin and bones laughs so hard she grows excessively fat. Paramount.
- f \*BOTTLES—Unusually clever and original cartoon in color. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj \*COCK O' THE WALK (Silly Symphony)—Some gorgeous kidding of spectacular musical numbers. United Artists.
- fj I FEEL LIKE A FEATHER IN THE BREEZE (Bouncing Ball)—Jack Denny's orchestra playing this popular song. Paramount.

## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures is a citizen body, organized in 1909 by the People's Institute of New York City as a medium for reflecting intelligent public opinion regarding a growing art and entertainment. This is still the Board's function, together with that of disseminating information on the subject of motion pictures and carrying on a constructive program having to do with community cooperation in the advancement and uses of the motion picture.

The National Board is opposed to legal censorship and is in favor of the community better films plan of placing emphasis upon and building support for the finer and more worthwhile films. It is at all times glad to cooperate with any agency to encourage and guide the motion picture in developing its possibilities both as recreation and as entertainment.

It carries on its work through various committees. All members of the committees serve without pay. No member is connected with the motion picture industry. They are representative of varied interests and activities and many are connected with large public welfare organizations or educational institutions.

The General Committee is a body evolved out of the original group organized in 1909. It is the appeal and central advisory committee of the National Board to which policies are referred and to which decisions of the Review Committee regarding pictures may be carried either by the producers or by the Review Committee itself.

The Executive Committee is composed of members of the General Committee and is the directing body of the National Board, charged with the formulation of policies, the election of members, the expenditure of funds and supervision of all administrative affairs.

The Review Committee is a large group of 300 members carrying on the work of reviewing the films. It is divided into sub-groups which meet for review per schedule during each week in the projection rooms of the various motion picture companies.

The Membership Committee supervises the membership list of the Review Committee and recommends the names of proposed new members for consideration by the Executive Committee.

The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays is composed of critics and students of the cinema interested particularly in encouraging the artistic development of the motion picture. It reviews and publishes a critique of the finest films and assists community groups in the showing of unusual films to special audiences. Its pioneer activity has done much to lay the foundation for the Little Photoplay Theatre movement and to stimulate the organization of subscription groups to develop audiences for the support of the creative achievements of the screen.

## NATIONAL MOTION PICTURE COUNCIL

The community or field work of the National Board of Review is conducted under its National Motion Picture Council, through affiliated membership groups, service contact groups and correspondents throughout the country. The National Council assists in the organization and program of work of local groups which are usually called Councils.

These Councils follow a plan initiated by the National Board in 1916 of having a membership composed of representatives from many organizations, cultural, educational, recreational, religious, and civic, so that they typify the original movement for community participation in the development and best use of the motion picture as recreation and education.

The objectives of such organizations are as follows:

To demonstrate through the education of public opinion, the effectiveness of selection and classification, instead of censorship, as a means of forwarding the development of the motion picture and its best uses.

To encourage through open meetings, forums, classes and other means, the study of the motion picture as a medium of entertainment, education and artistic expression.

To concentrate the attention of the public on specific worthwhile films through the publication of a Photoplay Guide to the selected pictures being currently shown at local theatres.

To arrange family Friday night or week-end programs of selected films, and junior matinees of pictures particularly suited to the tastes of children, through cooperation with local exhibitors.

To endorse and further the use of visual education through motion pictures in the schools.

To arrange and promote occasional exhibitions of exceptional and cultural films that would not normally be shown in the commercial theatres.

### PUBLICATIONS

The National Board of Review and its Council as an aid to the groups carrying out these objectives furnishes an informational service through its publications.

#### National Board of Review Magazine (monthly)

\$2.00 a year for individual subscriptions  
\$1.00 a year to Council or club groups

#### Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures

\$2.50 a year when taken alone, available at a special rate of \$1.00 in conjunction with the Magazine.

#### Selected Pictures Catalog (annual) ..... 25c

#### Special Film Lists ..... 10c ea.

Such as Selected Films for Children's Showings, Selected Book-Films, Educational Films, etc.

#### National Board of Review—Its Background, Growth and Present Status.....free

#### National Board of Review—How It Works.....free

#### A Plan and a Program for Community Motion Picture Councils .....free



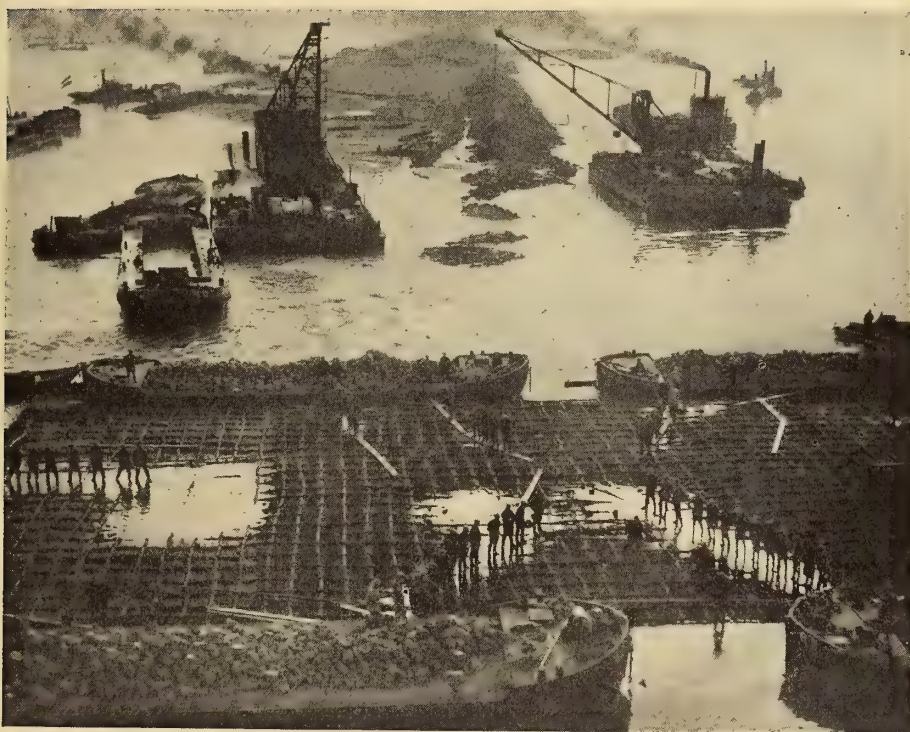
# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

MAY 20 1936  
PERIODICAL DIVISION

Vol. XI, No. 5



May, 1936



*The Zuider Zee in Joris Ivens' film "New Earth" (page 9)*

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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

m ABSOLUTE QUIET—Lionel Atwill, Wallace Ford, Irene Hervey. Novel by George F. Worts. Directed by George B. Seitz. Melodrama plentifully sprinkled with comedy, about strange goings-on on a rich man's ranch when a plane crashed down in the fog. Crowded with a variety of characters and somewhat confused in action, but though there's nobody to sympathize with there is abundant uncertainty about how things will turn out. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f \*AMATEUR GENTLEMAN, THE—Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Elissa Landi. Novel by Jeffery Farnol. Directed by Thornton Freeland. The son of a famous boxer goes up to London to prove himself a gentleman, proving also his merit as a fighter, a lover and an amateur detective. This British production is well paced combining action and a charming slowness, thus holding the interest and upholding the period of more than a century ago. United Artists.

fj COMIN' 'ROUND THE MOUNTAIN—Gene Autry. Screen story by Oliver Drake. Directed by Mack Wright. A story of pony express days—unusually good outdoor action, with a wild stallion developing into almost the hero. Republic.

f COUNTRY BEYOND, THE—Rochelle Hudson, Paul Kelly. Novel by James Oliver Curwood. Directed by Eugene Forde. Fundamentally a story of the Mounted Police after fur smugglers, but it is well above the average of such tales, interesting characters, and action, and the splendid dog Buck to add unusual color. 20th Century-Fox.

fj DANCING PIRATE, THE—Charles Collins, Steffi Duna, Frank Morgan. Story by Emma Lindsey Squier. Directed by Lloyd Corrigan. A romantic comic opera picture done in Technicolor. A New England dancing teacher, in the 1820s, gets shanghaied on a pirate ship and escapes to a Mexican town in California. Lively and pleasant, and the color the best, being the least intrusive, that a long film has had. RKO-Radio.

fj DRAKE THE PIRATE—Matheson Lang. Play by Louis N. Parker. Directed by Arthur Woods. With Dr. Charles Beard as the director of research for this British production telling of Sir Francis Drake's rise from a seaman to the conqueror of the Spanish Armada, this picture deserves special mention for its authenticity. The historical incidents are unusually well connected, the costuming effective and the acting satisfactory. Suggested for schools and libraries. Worth being kept permanently available for its historical value. First Division.

f EX MRS. BRADFORD, THE — William Powell, Jean Arthur. Novel by James Edward Grant. Directed by Stephen Roberts. Comedy, melodrama and mystery in a bright and lively mixture. A surgeon with a flair for solving police puzzles, his divorced wife who writes detective stories, and a jockey who mysteriously dies in a race. Many laughs and several thrills. RKO-Radio.

m GIRL FROM MANDALAY, THE—Conrad Nagel, Kay Linaker, Donald Cook. Story "Tiger Valley" by Raynard Campbell. Directed by Howard Bretherton. A quick marriage, followed by trouble, in the Indian jungle, with a devil tiger to increase the excitement. The triangular complications are not unusual, but the setting gives them a new atmosphere. Republic.

f \*GREAT ZIEGFELD, THE—William Powell, Luise Rainer, Myrna Loy, Fannie Brice. Screen story by William Anthony McGuire. Directed by Robert Z. Leonard. Glorifying the great glorifier—the career of Ziegfeld as a showman, combined with his two marriages to Anna Held and Billie Burke. Spectacular entertainment, reproducing parts of Ziegfeld musical shows on a gorgeous scale. Disappointing to sticklers for chronological accuracy, but an impressive show. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. (See also page 12.)

f HARVESTER. THE—Alice Brady, Russell Hardie. Novel by Gene Stratton Porter. Directed by Joseph Santley. A story of country life in Indiana some 30 years ago, mostly about a designing mother trying to get a husband for her daughter. Full of sweetness and the simpler virtues. Republic.

m I MARRIED A DOCTOR—Pat O'Brien, Josephine Hutchinson, Ross Alexander. Novel (Continued on page 14)



# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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## Mr. Douglas Fairbanks Jr. Makes a Speech

*Popular among the stars at the National Board of Review 1936 Luncheon was Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., and fortunately for the audience he was not only to be seen but to be heard. What he told there about why and how he became an actor-producer we are bringing to our readers as of interest to them as it was to the assembly that day.*

**S**PEECH-MAKING is something that we are all of us frightened with. Speech-making is always rather like an operation. There is a great fear beforehand, a great deal of pain when it is going on and a great relief for all concerned when it is over. As a matter of fact I have been so busy rehearsing radio programs that I am not prepared. These papers I hold are just something to do with my hands.

I was given a note here that says that I might want to tell you why I became an actor-producer. Well I think I would. I don't know whether anybody knows it.

Actors generally are supposed to like talking about themselves. I am not particularly like that. I just don't like talking. I stutter along and if you'll hang on with me I'll hang on with you.

I became an actor-producer in England, not in Hollywood. And it is a very strange thing to have happen. I would like to have done it in Hollywood. I wanted to do it. But when I went over to England on holiday there was a great deal of enthusiasm for pictures over there. Out of twenty-five pictures maybe one would be pretty good for a

change, and when they discovered that, they had a lot of enthusiasm. It was like Hollywood fifteen years ago, that pioneer spirit. It was interesting and very exciting. They didn't have any nationalist feeling about it saying—"British pictures! Hooray!" Their main consideration was English-speaking pictures. It was an international feeling. Here we are, more or less related, the only countries in the world that can call each other cousins literally. Let's have a medium that is truly international. It has to play to two hundred million people a week, the average audience for pictures. After all, when you count in the British Empire which is a quarter of the world, and the United States, you get that interchange, and it is a very, very exciting thing to happen. Probably the thing that has made Hollywood what it is is the fact that it is international, that there are people brought from all over the world to Hollywood. We want not particularly an American picture, but one to appeal just as much to the coolies in China as it does to the Maharajah in India, and for that purpose it might be well to encourage intercommunication between the countries.

Well I always wanted to have something to say, and nobody would let me. They all say, "Well just another actor. We will keep him in his place. Keep him quiet." And I was always kicking up a lot of dust and generally raising the devil all around. They knew how to shut me up in Hollywood. So when I went over there I got the idea of

being able to say what I wanted to say in pictures and it had nothing to do with a national feeling. It was my life, the only work I knew. I had been in it for fifteen years. I started in 1921. Although I didn't know much about it, it was the only thing I did know anything about, and I had a feeling that I wanted to say a few things or do a few things in a certain way. One of the ways was to surround myself with people whom I knew knew an awful lot more than I did about anything, and to have them as partners to tell me what to do. That was the way the company was set up. We worked on it steadily for about a year, forming it quietly. I didn't want to have any national company; I wanted to have an international company. I had talked to Sam Goldwyn when I was over there and he had encouraged me on the idea. I talked to Charlie Chaplin on the phone and he said, "It is a grand idea. Stick to it." And when I had it all set up I was lucky enough to get a United Artists release for our product and that was very exciting.

We have only started on an international company, a company half British and half American, an English speaking company designed for the world, which we hope it will entertain and in which create a feeling that they want to create over there. (This is getting to be like a diplomat's speech. I ought to have red ribbons across my chest, and swords.)

There is a feeling over there of, "Let's get together. We don't want to make better pictures than you. We can't. We aren't geared for mass production. We can't turn out sixty pictures a year as a company. We have to stop for tea in the afternoon. You can't do sixty pictures a year and stop for tea." They can't turn out Fords and Chevrolets, and things like that, but they do make Rolls Royces. So what they are trying to do is to specialize. They are making mistakes and they know it. They say, "We want to learn. Send over your technicians and your people and if we get any good ideas developed we will send them over there. Let's get together and make pictures. That is what is important. The cinema, this film medium which has developed out of

the century which is so grand—let's get together and build it up."

That is the pioneer spirit. They are making mistakes but once in a while they make a success. If they make a mistake they say, "Well, we have Hollywood to thank for it." Actually the studios over there are 60% Hollywood personnel, Hollywood trained people. It is like being in Hollywood. So it has become an exciting thing. I am for sticking to it. So far it has turned out pretty well and I am going out to the coast now to talk to my father and to Chaplin and to Goldwyn and arrange for our programs, doing some of them in Hollywood and some of them in London, with a general interchange of pictures and talent and people back and forth.

You are usually supposed to end a speech with something funny, to make people laugh and so maybe you will pretend I have said something funny and laugh. I am really reminded of a well known saying of Elbert Hubbard which I think applies to most actors once they get started. Elbert Hubbard said (and I feel it most pointedly this moment) that it is far better to keep one's mouth closed and be thought a fool than to open it and remove all doubt.

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## Music for the Films

*A Handbook for Composers and Conductors*

By LEONID SABANEEV

A very useful book about the special requirements for arranging music that is to be reproduced on film. It presupposes a pretty thorough knowledge of instruments, orchestration, etc., and is intended for composers and conductors already well grounded in their profession, dealing chiefly with the special technicalities involved in adapting themselves to the film medium.

*Published by Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd., \$1.75.*



# The Photoplay as Literary Art

By DR. WALTER BARNES

*Dr. Barnes, who is Professor of the Teaching of English at the School of Education of New York University, has been interested in the motion picture as literature for some time. In 1931 as Chairman of the Committee on Literature in the Secondary School of the National Council of Teachers of English he gave special attention to the motion picture as a literary form, an attention which he enlarged later as president of that Council and which he has continued in the National Education Association activity with the motion picture. His address on the subject at the Board's Annual Conference is given here.*

I define the photoplay as a novel-drama. Often drawn from a novel or a theatre play, it has a theme, a plot, with crises and climaxes, its characters acting and reacting upon one another. It has, we will hope, point and purpose. It ends in some kind of landing place. It is to all intents and purposes a form of literary art, a combination of novel and play and as such it must be judged by the criteria of literary art. But before I proceed to discuss these criteria, I wish to mention three or four factors which I think must be taken into consideration. We must not impose laws from above or from some other art upon this new art.

One of these factors conditioning the photoplay as art is the fact that it is new, modern, mechanical. Vast mechanical and physical difficulties had to be conquered before the art forces could be released, and while there were during all that time a good many art offerings, nevertheless the attention was centered, necessarily so perhaps, upon the mechanics, upon the wheels within wheels of the machinery of the industry. And if sometimes we think the development has been slow, I think we need to recall this necessary ground-work in that machinery. There are indications now, perhaps, that we have reached a kind of landing place and for some time, perhaps, we can consider the mechanics conquered and the qualities of art may emerge more and more clearly. Certainly in judging the modern photoplay we must consider that.

And in the second place I think we must consider another quality or aspect of motion pictures as art; namely, that it is in its

very nature ephemeral. We see a picture this week and next week it passes out to the neighborhood theatres and the week after next it is gone. And while it may be preserved in the Film Libraries, in the very nature of the case that particular bit of art is past. It isn't so with a book; it isn't so with a play. Books can be reissued; plays can be revived. I don't see how actors, artists, can be very well satisfied, I don't see how they can put in their besticks on art which is necessarily transitory. I feel like applauding the earnest, honest work which has gone into the movies considering this very regrettable handicap.

There is a third consideration I think even more important and that is that for better or worse our commercial photoplay in America is a popular art. Not a folk art—I think it cannot be that, comparable to puppetry, to folk music and folk dancing. Our people, though glossed over with some sophistication, though they have ability to travel and some literary art, are nevertheless a very simple folk limited in their range of interest, but unless I am mistaken, they have passed beyond the stage of folk art, are not in tune with folk art with all that connotes. Maybe in the mountains of Kentucky it might be done if the people there could be equipped with the necessary knowledge and technique of art. Walt Disney can do it. It has been done. But I suggest the direction in which our development should go is not that of folk art and I think we deceive ourselves by calling it that. The time has passed in this country—perhaps not in Russia—for genuine, indigenous folk art. A popular art, yes. Not a folk art.

Well there is a way out, a way indicated somewhat by what the publishing houses have done with novels. There is a possibility that certain photoplay producers may produce, for a limited clientele, better specimens of art. They have done it already. I am not sure that that is the way out. We shouldn't look the gift horse in the mouth and certainly we have had some fine things drawn from classic plays and novels. Nev-

ertheless I think the development which should come is in the direction of working out in this country a genuine, sterling, homespun popular art. Maybe it can't be done. I expect there are many handicaps. Nevertheless I believe it is possible. Charlie Chaplin has done it. Will Rogers would have done it I think if he had ever had a proper vehicle. Certainly it is thinkable that we can develop in America a genuine, fine, popular art which will give the mass of the people what they want and still give discriminating critics what they want. That, I think, is the hope and the problem of the photoplay as literary art.

There is one other consideration which we must mention; namely, the photoplay industry is a business. It is not primarily concerned in the making of art. Making money and making art are not necessarily incompatible, one would think. Publishing houses make money, novelists and playwrights make money, we hope. Sometimes they do. There seems to be nothing necessarily antagonistic in the two processes, and yet I fear that in the last analysis, in the long run, the two are incompatible and hostile. Certainly if the photoplay industry gives itself over, as apparently it has done in the past, largely to the making of money and not the making of art, we shall have forever a problem.

But I pass from those matters, important as they are, to a little closer dealing with certain criteria that seem to me important in appraising this new form of literary art.

One of the abiding and eternal principles of literary art regards the structure. A piece of art must have integration and balance and proportion. It must achieve what Edgar Allan Poe called "totality of impression" or to quote Coleridge it must give the "greatest pleasure in the parts consistent with pleasure in the whole." There must be a single, dominating idea. The whole thing must be synthesized and brought together as a unit.

Well I think there is no question at all but that as things have been we have had extreme and many violations of this first criteria. I think you find them in almost every film presented. You find episodes. You find the intrusion of ideas which are

not germane to the theme, which do not contribute to the totality of effect. You find a particular film trying to drag in all the possible effect instead of consecrating itself to the development of one idea. I think I can say without rancor that practically every photoplay I have seen has violated this principle.

I suppose we should not expect as tight and exact a structure in the photoplay as we do, for example, in a novel or a stage play. I suppose there should be some looseness and flexibility. But I think the photoplays are indictable on the ground that they pay far too little attention to the matter of binding together and integrating an idea. And until they have learned how to do it, I think as art their products will always be weak. And I submit that there are difficulties.

Here is a novelist who sits down at his desk by himself and by himself creates throughout an integrated piece of work. Here is the playwright who in the solitude of his own room, talking with his friends perhaps at times but largely through his own work, solo work, creates a unified, a definite and specific piece of art. It is his own, shot through with his own personality; it is one piece of work, a unit.

In the movies, as I understand, that individual domination can not proceed. You have the producers and the script writers and the directors and the actors and the cameramen all contributing their bits and their suggestions which may make for cleverness and variety but certainly it must be difficult in that situation to achieve anything like unity.

Another of the elements which I think militates against the strict unity we want in first rate art is the fact that we still have the star system and stars sometimes steal the show and hog the stage. I think very recently the pretty good film, *Great Expectations* was spoiled because they had a first rate character actor and they wanted to give him all the space they could and he stole, it seems to me, the unity of the play. He made it one-sided, lopsided. I submit that is a very difficult matter to cure. There are other difficulties no doubt also but whatever the difficulties are, it seems to me



quite clear that only by achieving some kind of dominating mastery through some artistic medium shall we get unified production, a unified piece.

I pass from that to consider the second criterion. The sensational and emotional elements, though indispensable, must be restrained and controlled and generally utilized to suggest meanings.

A typical work of art, in any medium, is composed of two elements, appeals to two aspects of our human nature. One element, usually that which seizes upon us first, is the emotional. The other, driven home to us by the force of the first, is the deliberative, the meditative, the intellectual. A work of art makes upon us an emotional impact, and usually leaves with us an idea, at least a hint of meaning; it moves us and it illuminates some aspect of human life; it excites us and it reveals a truth.

The photoplay makes a vigorous attack upon our emotions. It offers, as the novel does, a group of human individuals imaginatively similar to ourselves, undergoing experiences more or less common to the race, but experiences raised somewhat above the normal, living a story, a drama with stress and strain, struggle and climax. But whereas the novel represents characters and experiences only through the novelist's narrative, description, explanation and dialogue, the photoplay presents them directly: we actually see and hear the personages, the action, the conversation. It is as though we were witnesses of the scene, by-standers, realizing immediately and passionately the fluctuations of the story and emotions, exclaiming, laughing, weeping, cheering, jeering, so that often we emerge from the movie-house limp from emotional exhaustion. In this the photoplay is not tied down to a conventional stage platform and can present a more convincing illusion of reality in many types of action, settings and scenes, the emotional power of the photoplay is frequently more intense than that of the stage play.

Now, this terrific onslaught upon our feeling constitutes at once a source of distinctive strength and a potential danger to the photoplay as an art form. No doubt we all need occasionally the intense arousal

of emotions, through vicarious experience. Our life day by day is—or appears to most of us to be—monotonous, habit-bound, and humdrum, limited to the routine, the commonplace. We probably need to engage in literary experience, highly colored, romantic, vehement and tense. We need it for an escape from reality. We need it because it may enable us to discern in our own existence the elements of beauty and drama, or emotional stimulation and intellectual significance of which we have been unaware.

But mere sensations, a succession of emotional shocks, the continual whipping up of our feelings, an orgy of experiences purely sensational and glandular, surely human life—and art—should provide more than that! If it is only thrills and jolts and “kicks” that we desire, we may resort to amusement parks and circuses, to football games and prize-fights, to murder trials and divorce courts, to drink and sex. Probably no one should live so highbrow an existence that he does not get an occasional fillip or wallop from such contacts; but assuredly restraint and temperance, a sense of balance, a perception of relative values, an abiding realization of human worth, should keep one from the excessive titillation and flagellation of sensations.

Whatever may be one's attitude toward this problem in life, it is certain that the finest art, while recognizing and utilizing the exuberance and vitality of the emotions, is notable for restraint, control and proportion. Literary artists, of course, vary widely in this respect, vary because of individual temperament, because of purpose and theme in different works, and there is no reason why we should treat them as a single artist class. And there is no reason to fear, either, that they will conform to a preconceived artistic pattern. But the truth is that the traditions and the very conditions under which art is created usually tend to make for judicial restraint and thoughtful proportion. The novelist or playwright has a design, a purpose, a theme, which he must develop, for which he feels respect, to which he must pay the tribute of devoted craftsmanship. The initial concept, the birth of an idea may be intensely exciting to the

author; but between the original thought and the completed novel or play lie many weeks and sometimes months and years of incubation, organization, invention, and expression, with the writer's attention concentrated on, consecrated to his total design, and the happy measure of the parts. Good art is not made in excitement and emotional disturbance. Finished art almost never emerges from a spontaneous burst of creativity. This is what Wordsworth had in mind when he said, "Poetry is emotion recollected in tranquility." The travail of creating a good novel or play even though it be a *jeu d'esprit*, an extravaganza, is so arduous and sustained and necessitates so much of what Charles Lamb called "fundamental brain work" that there need be no fear lest finally it be a whirlwind, or a whirligig of sensation, impulse and feeling.

If the novelist or dramatist wears his heart on his sleeve, if he yields readily to emotions and seeks to stimulate unduly our emotions, we call him, quite properly, an inferior artist — sentimental, melodramatic, sensational, comparable to the soap-box orator or the tabloid reporter. We expect him to hold his feelings in leash, to stop short of excess and satiety, to display restraint, subtlety, maturity, to employ hints rather than obvious artifices, to be evasive and guarded and indirect. If we perceive he is working on our feelings, we stiffen ourselves against him. His art is to mute the violence of his emotion and to move us by insinuation, innuendo, "the still small voice."

When one applies these general statements concerning restraint of emotions in fine art to the average, or even the superior photoplay, we are impressed immediately by its excessive display of emotions, its frontal, often brutal attack upon our senses, by its failure to control and discipline itself into an art form.

That is my chief complaint against the photoplay as an art form, that it whips our emotions to such a frenzy and that out of that whirlwind of sensations there can emerge nothing of the fine, quiet, thoughtful suggestion of reason and temperance and meaning.

I have been very much impressed recently

in seeing, even in such well wrought photoplays as *Mutiny on the Bounty*, how we go in for cruelty, for working up of almost sadistic effects.

The literary artist, the novelist can not possibly produce those effects. He is not dealing with the same medium. The photoplay director and artist must learn how to utilize this media of his, so much stronger in its appeal, so much more immediate and direct upon our physical sensations, so that he will not continue to stir up to such a degree our feelings. Out of that froth of feeling there surely must emerge something that is solid and substantial and stable and fine.

I wish I could go on from this to some statement at any rate of the meaning that should come out of this emotion.

I have no quarrel with the movies about the historicity of their plays. I think they do wonderfully well in presenting historically plays, well costumed in the period and so on. If occasionally they make a slip, it is no more than the rest of us do. Greater artists than they have made such slips.

My greatest complaint there is on the score of truth-telling, that in the first place the psychology of their characters is often immature and misleading; that they don't perceive the truth or bring it out; that when they do concern themselves with ideas of importance, socially or intellectually, they must apparently make those for a mass audience. They seem to think they must do that and therefore their ideas are often moronic in their level. Almost never does one get from the movies a well developed, subtle idea. Facts, yes. Emotions, yes, plenty of them. But for wisdom and truth conveyed subtly through intimations and hints of beauty, of that we get very little.

I shouldn't leave the matter here with such condemnation. Certainly we have improved and certainly through such efforts as those made by this particular organization and through the work done in the schools we can raise the public and Hollywood along with it to a higher level of art.

I am not much interested in ethical matters. Once you get fine art, restrained and careful and thoughtful, ethical questions

(Continued on page 15)



# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS

## DEPARTMENT

This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of Exceptional and Honorable

Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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## Joris Ivens

IT is an event when we come for the first time upon an artist who has arrived at a sufficient mastery of his medium to express himself clearly and forcibly, and who has something to say. When, added to the power of clear and forceful expression, there is beauty—the beauty that is perceived under the surfaces of life by sensitiveness and sympathy and is recreated with such restraint that it pervades the man's whole work without ever obtruding or calling attention to itself—you have something very difficult to praise adequately. It isn't exaggerating to say that the appearance of a group of films made by the young Dutch director, Joris Ivens, brought to America by the New Film Alliance, is an event of this order.

Ivens is what would be called a documentalist in the John Grierson-Paul Rotha vocabulary. In their terminology "documentary" has evolved from an adjective into a noun, and is used as one might use the word "poetry", as a category into which certain kinds of work fall. Flaherty's *Nanook* was one of the first films to which it was applied. The current *March of Time* series are also documentary. The opposite of fiction films, they go straight to actuality for their material, and they may range from national movements like *Grass* to so infinitesimal a thing as the functioning of a grain of pollen.

Obviously, however factual the material, the question of selection and treatment has to come in, and that is where the quality of

the director shows. It is where the quality of Joris Ivens shows, as an artist and as a man.

The films Ivens has brought to America are all short, some of them mere fragments. *Rain*, almost his first, was made in Holland in 1929. *Industrial Symphony* was also made in Holland, two years later. *Borinage* was made in Belgium and put into its final form in Russia. *Songs of Heroes* (*Komsomol*) was made in the Soviet Union. *New Earth*, his last, was finished a little more than a year ago, and made in Holland. They are, in their different ways, all interesting in themselves, and additionally interesting as a record of his development.

*Rain* is what the French call a *cine-poeme*. It might better, perhaps, have been named *Rain in a City*, because it has nothing of the abstractness and impersonality of mere rain. It is a lovely picture, lovely and restful. Nothing happens in it but a gentle shower—the premonitions of it in the wind, the first sprinkles, then the gradual, placid downfall, at last the breaking of the clouds and the sun again. It is as refreshing as a bit of spring, and it shows that from the beginning Ivens possessed that singular gift of seeming to get inside what he was photographing before he presented the outside of it. Without obviously poetizing or sentimentalizing he has managed to show rain as an almost living thing that comes to people in a town. The feeling of people—their homes, their streets, their canals—is never absent.

*Industrial Symphony* was made for a radio corporation. The four fragments we

have seen are quite brief, picturing workers at their work and (a quick little study in sound and motion) the testing of a loud-speaker. The final fragment shows men blowing glass. It is astonishing merely as a record of how a certain kind of work is done, but even more astonishing in the relation it reveals between the work and the worker. Here, for the first time, is a striking example of one of Ivens' most characteristic gifts, foreshadowed in his treatment of the rain—his ability to live himself into the thing he is picturing, so that every movement, every strain, comes out of his camera with a vividness of essentials that makes you feel as if you had been using the same muscles yourself. But even more striking is the way he has caught not only how the men are shaping the glass, but how the blowing of glass is shaping the men. Not the astounding cheek muscles alone, but farther in, deeper. Here is the kind of beauty that has nothing to do with prettiness—the beauty of something profoundly truthful caught and expressed for others to see.

*Borinage* is a picture of miners in the coal region of Belgium where Van Gogh spent some of his unhappy youth—a miserable, sub-human existence which Ivens has made exceptionally moving and real. To anyone who knows the tricky way cameras have of disguising the realities of things with light and shadow, so that even a garbage pile is easily softened into something that is not garbage at all but a collection of objects composed into an attractive picture, the way Ivens has kept his scenes bleak and uninsistently harsh is remarkable.

For contrast this episode of Belgian workers has been put into a framework which takes a delegation of Belgians to Soviet Russia, where they tell of their life at home, and are shown how different are the conditions where they are visiting. This manner of treatment is effective for its purpose, but it makes the film very explicitly a preachment.

*Songs of Heroes* consists of two episodes from a film dealing with the Soviet League of Youth, and they contrast the youth of present-day Germany with the youth of present-day Russia. They are stirring and

effective, and show how well Ivens can whip up excitement and emotion in an audience by his manipulation of crowds. The second episode is also a fine picture of big machinery at work.

*New Earth*, the newest film, is also the best. The best technically, and the most eloquent. What it says is implicit in what it shows—and what it says is profound and searching. It is a record of the making of new farm land for Holland by dyking off some of the Zuyder Zee, and after the long years of labor, the growing of the first wheat crop. It is a remarkable picture of all the steps of the work, multitudinous in detail but single and clear in outline—men with their hands, their ships, their tools, their machines, driving back the sea till the triumphant climax when the last gap is filled, and the land is won. Man has conquered nature. Then more work, to make the land tillable, and plant the grain and grow it. Till harvest time; then the crashing of markets, the tumbling to pieces of world distribution; though millions are starving in other parts of the earth the grain here in these hard-won fields is not worth harvesting—it cannot be sold. So fire is set to it, or it is dumped over the wall into the sea. Man is defeated by the foolish ways of his fellow man.

On the surface this is all just something that happened. And an amazing surface it is. Full of energy and vitality, rich in little observations that keep you constantly aware that the men are men, men who work and rest from their work, who eat and have families—who conquer the sea, and then find it hardly worth having done. Beneath the surface of what happened in one particular place at one particular time runs the deeper, longer story of the struggle of man in the world, and his victories and defeats. At the end of the film comes a song, which may or may not point up a moral—it is in Dutch, so an American does not know. But no pointing up of a moral is needed—the perfection of the picture as a cinematic creation is in its saying what it has to say, completely and unmistakably, in its own medium of the camera, without the slightest need of comment or explanation.



So, from *Rain* to *New Earth*, we can see how Ivens has grown from a sensitive observer to a sensitive understander. His work has increased in vigor and expressiveness as he has come closer to life and taken it into his heart and brain. And that lifts his "documentaries" into something far more creative than mere reporting, just as they are far more exciting and enriching than mere fiction.

Probably the strongest impression left by these films—symbolized by numberless incidents that stay in the memory like experiences, preserved in remembrance by some special poignancy, of our own—is that here is an artist of remarkable honesty and sanity, with a profound respect for his art and for his material. To the practice of his art he brings a fine technical equipment and a sense of proportion and relationships that keeps his technical facility from running away with him. His material—man and his work—he seems to approach with a mixture of insight, sympathy, idealism and common sense that selects those significant elements which can best show the meanings he sees in it. Upon this, with a passion held well in hand, his art goes to work. What it turns out is very fine.

These films are unlikely to be seen in the ordinary commercial theatre. The battle for this kind of thing, which the film societies have already carried far in England, has yet to be really started here. But it is a pity that they cannot be seen by the growing number of people who have yearnings and ambitions to do something in the movies for themselves, outside the big production plants. They might not learn how to finance their ambitions, but they could learn a good direction in which those ambitions might steer if by the grace of God and mammon they were given a chance.—J. S. H.

## Mr. Deeds Goes to Town

Written by Robert Riskin from a novel by Clarence Budington Kelland; directed by Frank Capra; photographed by Joseph Walker. Produced and distributed by Columbia Pictures Corporation.

### The cast

<i>Longfellow Deeds</i> .....	Gary Cooper
<i>Babe Bennett</i> .....	Jean Arthur
<i>MacWade</i> .....	George Bancroft
<i>Cornelius Cobb</i> .....	Lionel Stander
<i>John Cedar</i> .....	Douglass Dumbrille
<i>Walter</i> .....	Raymond Walburn
<i>Judge Walker</i> .....	H. B. Warner
<i>Mme. Pomponi</i> .....	Margaret Matzenauer
<i>Bodyguard</i> .....	Warren Hymer
<i>Theresa</i> .....	Muriel Evans
<i>Mabel Dawson</i> .....	Ruth Donnelly
<i>Mal</i> .....	Spencer Charters
<i>Mrs. Meredith</i> .....	Emma Dunn
<i>Psychiatrist</i> .....	Wyrley Birch
<i>Budington</i> .....	Arihur Hoyt
<i>Farmer</i> .....	John Wray
<i>Mr. Semple</i> .....	Jameson Thomas
<i>Mrs. Semple</i> .....	Mayo Methot
<i>Waiter</i> .....	Gene Morgan
<i>Morrow</i> .....	Walter Catlett
<i>Jane Faulkner</i> .....	Margaret Seddon

IT took an avalanche of awards and medals, rushing down upon *It Happened One Night*, to put Frank Capra up among the critically crowned, though his producers had been aware of his value to them for some time. The glory was spread out to include a best piece of acting for an actress and another for an actor. The medals should have all been boiled down into one, and given to Capra—with probably a ribbon to Robert Riskin. For Gable and Colbert had acted much harder innumerable times before Capra gave them a chance to be merely charming and human, and though they have tried to repeat those performances (being just charming and human) under other directors, it is notable that no more medals have been showered upon them.

By now it is fairly well known that Capra is one of our most individual directors. He has that rare thing, a style of his own, which appears to grow out of his gift for warming up a plot with a goodnatured spirit, disguising its frailties with all sorts of human and amusing by-play, and keeping the whole thing plausible and pleasant by a genial semblance of common sense. And he is a wizard at taking players in need of a break and making them so likeable that they are given credit for good acting.

Perhaps it is something of a tribute to Capra that no matter how much we enjoy

his last picture we are wondering, at the end of it, what he will do next. It was that way with *Broadway Bill*—pretty swell for a racing picture, but we wished he would tackle something with a little more substance to it. We had forgotten the *Bitter Tea*. How would that strike us now, now that we know Capra is good?

Well, *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* seems to have more substance to it. It is a Saturday Evening Postish story, but it has quite an important theme—a young man and his ideals. Beneath that runs the good old theme of the honest country lad and the city slickers. He is so completely a country lad that he has never been outside his own little town, but he inherits a vast fortune and goes to the city, where his native Yankee wit serves him quite well in keeping his head above the plots and counterplots that swirl around him. Until he finds the dream girl has been deceiving him along with the others. That is the ideal whose loss he cannot bear, and he submits to a sanity trial, the outcome of which will determine whether he loses all his money or not, without a word in his own defense. Until he finds that the dream-girl, though deceiving him had truly loved him. Whereupon his native Yankee wit revives and sweeps away all his enemies.

It sounds rather crazy, and it is crazier than it sounds. In its craziness lies much of its virtue—out of the fantastic it creates something touching and moving as well as amusing. For Capra's genial gift is at work again, keeping things going at such a lively pace that there is no time to stop and think, and at the same time weaving a spell of likeableness and plausibility that is just beginning to wear a bit thin when the story sweeps into the trial scene—and then you sit up for some good, gripping drama that keeps you sitting up till the end.

Perhaps there is substance in the plentiful bits of satire—all fairly amiable—and in Mr. Deeds' plans for the unemployed, who are the only people who don't go back on him. It depends on how you take them. At any rate Mr. Capra has worked his usual magic with them. And one wonders what *The Lost Horizon* will be like, with confidence and hope.—J. S. H.

## Glorification

NOBODY expected *The Great Ziegfeld* to be a serious essay in biography, but there were a few hopes that such a fine chance to follow the Follies from their humblish beginnings on the old New York Roof to their final magnificence would result in a Broadway panorama of some color and fidelity. So many memories, and so many people, were available for it!

Those hopes are not fulfilled, but we have a super-gorgeous show that is probably a truer monument to the Great Glorifier than any plodding following of fact could have been. The showman spirit of Ziegfeld revisits the earth in this picture with a resplendency he could never have dreamed of. Even in its scarcity of humor the film is like a super-super-Ziegfeld show. Fannie Brice—and all too little of her—is the one real thing from the old days, on the old level.

After all, the ageing rememberers of old Broadway are a small part of the whole public, and getting smaller daily—for the other, far larger, part, this show will serve handsomely as an embodiment of a tradition which has been like a myth to them.—J.S.H.

## H. G. Wells Brought Down to Earth

THE screen may surround a lot of things with glamor that might better be left in their unglamorous crudity, but occasionally, and no doubt involuntarily, it performs the service of bringing down to earth where we can really look at it something that we have been in the habit of thinking quite lofty and admirable.

After all these years one of the great minds of our time—at least he was thought so two or three decades ago—has written something directly for the movies, written what he wanted to write, without front-office dictation or anything. Mr. H. G. Wells has dramatized his oft-repeated dream of the ruin of the world through nationalities and wars, and its eventual redemption through the dictatorship of science. An elaborate, even colossal, production of it has been



made, and we can see what the dream looks like, reduced to visible reality.

To tell the truth, it looks like Buck Rogers written with longer words. The beginning of the picture, playing out the theme of suspicion and war that is now tuning up in Europe, is pretty impressive, being quite plausible and acceptable to our knowledge and experience. With the return of the Dark Ages, following years and years of war till civilization has vanished, things begin to seem more fantastic than horrible. With the coming of the new and perfect civilization fantasy and horror unite in a grand culmination, and most of us are devoutly thankful we won't live till 2036. For the Wellsian Heaven-on-earth is even duller than eternal harp-playing, and for all its gadgets not nearly so superior to the vision of St. John as Mr. Wells appears to think.

Maybe there is something to be said for those producers who prefer their scenarios to be written by minds not so great.—J.S.H.

## Some Fun

COMEDY in the films has not been a thing of varied shape or substance and the changes rung on it have been, in the main, the familiar variations of slapstick and gag and their sophisticated Lubitsch cousins. Occasionally there have been excursions into the fantastic or the satirical, a *One Glorious Day* or more recently a *Million Dollar Legs*, but these, despite their importance, have left little imprint. Now, with three different types of comedy currently ranking among the most successful of the season's films, some comparison of comic trends is possible.

*Desire* is an exceedingly adept romantic melodrama, done with sly good-humor. *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* is something rather new for the films, almost a fantasia of folk-humor, covered at some length elsewhere in this department. But *The Milky Way* represents the zenith of the gag-and-slapstick comedy, with one fairly new element, dialogue-timing. It also marks, for Harold Lloyd, either a step in a new direction or a process of gradual but inevitable technological unemployment.

The criticism leveled against most of the

Lloyd comedies, on aesthetic grounds, has always been that they were collections of gags, situations, unrelated bits of comic incident, and that the films as a whole had no unity beyond the presence of Mr. Lloyd as a central character in the events, and that even he was not essential to the pictures because all that was called for was not a "comedian" or "actor," but a victim of circumstances, eventually triumphant but never anything more than a stock figure. *The Milky Way*, while it is by far the best of the Lloyd comedies, is so obviously a superior piece of slapstick craftsmanship in spite of him that it must lead either to Lloyd surrounding himself with comedians who are really expert, as he has in this picture, or to the public recognizing that it can get the typical Lloyd picture without Lloyd himself.

*The Milky Way*, with its story of a puny milkman who accidentally participates in a sidewalk knockout of the middleweight champ, and then is built into a pugilistic wonder-man, is obviously a set-up for the traditional Lloyd victim-of-circumstances routine. The difference between this and former Lloyd comedies is that the gags are almost all integral ones, furthering the plot rather than pleasantly interrupting it. Moreover, for a slapstick comedy, *The Milky Way* is almost surprisingly literate. The people, instead of being the usual vague background, are individuals in their own right, characters who might have sprung out of *Broadway* and *The Front Page*, a group so frenzied that one instinctively misses Lee Tracy. It is on these people, on their actions, their mugging, and on the flip ready dialogue that *The Milky Way* depends, and not in any sense on its theoretical leading character.

Through identifying himself so thoroughly with the "gag" comedy, Lloyd made a sizable personal fortune and acquired a vast body of fans who enjoyed knowing what to expect in a Lloyd film, but now that he has built it to such expert heights, he may be surprised to find the less humorous Frankenstein motif overtaking him. Lloyd has subjected himself and us to the gag for years, and now at last the gag is beginning to show that it can get along without him.

—J. A. T.

## Selected Pictures Guide

(Continued from page 2)

- "Main Street" by Sinclair Lewis. Directed by Archie Mayo. A sincere adaptation of the novel—a young wife's difficulties in adapting herself to a new town and new environment. Warner.
- f LAST JOURNEY, THE—Godfrey Tearle, Hugh Williams. Screen story by J. Jefferson Farjean. Directed by Bernard Vorhaus. A thrilling story of events aboard an English express train with an engineer at the throttle who has gone mad thinking his wife was untrue to him. A British production. Atlantic.
- f MESSAGE TO GARCIA, A—Wallace Beery, Barbara Stanwyck, John Boles. Screen story by W. P. Lipscomb and Gene Fowler. Directed by George Marshall. A popularized romantic dramatization of the slogan endeared to business men by Elbert Hubbard—on the theme of getting a job done whatever the difficulties. In the period of the Spanish-American War, it has plenty of adventurous action with a good deal of carelessness in writing and direction. 20th Century-Fox.
- f \*MR. DEEDS GOES TO TOWN—See Exceptional Photoplays Department, page 11.
- f MOON IS OUR HOME, THE—Margaret Sullavan, Henry Fonda. Story by Faith Baldwin. Directed by William Seiter. Fast moving comedy romance in which a Hollywood star and a famous young author, not aware of each other's identity, meet and fall in love. Light and entertaining. Paramount.
- fj O'MALLEY OF THE MOUNTED—George O'Brien. Screen story by William S. Hart. Directed by David Howard. A pretty good Mountie story—not highly original (a man pretends to be a desperado to catch the gang) but lively in action. 20th Century-Fox.
- f PANIC ON THE AIR—Lew Ayres, Florence Rice. Screen story by A. W. Tinslay. Directed by D. Ross Lederman. A radio newsman detects and helps capture a murderer. Columbia.
- m SMALL TOWN GIRL—Janet Gaynor, Robert Taylor, James Stewart, Binnie Barnes. Novel by Ben Ames Williams. Directed by William A. Wellman. An accidental marriage between a young Boston doctor and a small town girl, which of course turns out all right in the end. Rather long for the mild suspense involved, but rich in amusing incidents and characters. Excellent script and direction, and Janet Gaynor and Taylor very good. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f SPECIAL INVESTIGATOR—Richard Dix, Margaret Callahan. Novel by Stanley Gardner. Directed by Louis King. Thoroughly entertaining story of a lawyer who conceals his identity and tracks down a gang of criminals while they are disposing of their stolen gold in a unique manner. RKO-Radio.
- f THINGS TO COME — Raymond Massey. Novel by H. G. Wells. Directed by William Cameron Menzies. A story of the future, with war after war bringing civilization down to the level of the dark ages 'till scientists eventually take over the running of the world and bring peace and order. Unusual and thought-provoking—a remarkable picturization of Wells' familiar ideas and theories. Suggested for school, library and church use. Worth being kept permanently available. United Artists. (See also page 12.)
- f TILL WE MEET AGAIN—Herbert Marshall, Gertrude Michael. Play by Alfred Davis. Directed by Robert Florey. A romantic spy story in which an Englishman and his Austrian fiancée, parted when war is declared, find each other in Germany. Paramount.
- f TIMES SQUARE PLAYBOY—Warren William, Gene Lockhart, June Travis. Play "Home Towners" by George M. Cohan. Directed by William McGann. A small town man comes to New York for the wedding of his old pal and undertakes a well-intentioned reform. The comedy is a bit repetitious but the picture is amusing throughout. Warner.
- fj TREACHERY RIDES THE RANGE—Dick Foran, Paula Stone. Screen story by William Jacobs. Directed by Frank McDonald. An excitingly told story of the days of the buffalo, Indians and bad men who stirred up the Indians for their own selfish purposes. Warner.
- f UNDER TWO FLAGS—Ronald Colman, Claudette Colbert, Victor McLaglen, Rosalind Russell. Novel by Ouida. Directed by Frank Lloyd. The romantic old novel of the Foreign Legion—with the mysterious English gentleman for whom the faithful vivandiere gave her life—revived by an excellent cast, both stars and subordinates. Very good battle scenes. 20th Century-Fox.
- m UNGUARDED HOUR — Loretta Young, Franchot Tone. Play by Ladislaus Fodor. Directed by Sam Wood. An interesting and dramatic story about a prosecuting attorney and his lovely young wife who find themselves dangerously involved in a murder mystery. Excellent acting by the entire cast. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f WITNESS CHAIR, THE—Ann Harding, Walter Abel, Douglas Dumbrille. Screen story by Rita Weiman. Directed by George Nicholls. What a woman did for a man she loved—mostly told in the form of a murder trial, which excellent direction lifts into interesting entertainment. RKO-Radio.



## Foreign Language Films

- f LORENZINO DE' MEDICI — Alessandro Moissi, Camillo Pilotti, Germana Paolieri. Directed by Guido Grignoni. With beautiful and impressive romantic trappings, this story of intrigue and violence in Renaissance Florence, when Lorenzo "the Little" helped get rid of a tyrant, has a certain historical value in addition to its dramatic interest. Italian with English titles superimposed. Suggested for schools and libraries. Nuovo Mondo.
- f MILIZIA TERRITORIALE (Territorial Militia)—Antonio Gandusio, Leda Gloria. Story by A. D. Benedetti. Directed by Mario Bonnard. An amusing comedy of how war changed social relations—an underling in a big factory became the commander of his boss' son. Very good acting. Dialogue all in Italian. Nuovo Mondo.
- f RE BURLONE (The Daughter of the Revolution)—Armando Falconi. An entertaining comedy about the genial king of Naples gaily joking his way through life while young patriots plot for a United Italy. Laid in the 1840s, the picture has excellent atmosphere, and is well produced. English subtitles well translated. Nuovo Mondo.
- f SKARHARDS-FLIRT (The Resort Flirt)—Gideon Wahlberg. Play by Gideon Wahlberg. Directed by Arne Bornebusch. Amusing comedy of a Swedish summer resort where a pretty visitor disrupts things for a brief period. Scandinavian.
- f MOT HOJDARNA (Toward the Heights)—An interesting winter journey into the snowy mountains. Scandinavian.
- f STOCKHOLMSMELODI (Stockholm's Melody)—Handsome scenic of Stockholm. Scandinavian.

## Short Subjects

### INFORMATIONALS

- fj ANIMAL CUNNING—Interesting piece about the natural cunning of animals. Educational.
- fj BENEATH THE SEA—Curious undersea creatures and a fight between an octopus and a shark. Vitaphone.
- fj CATCHING TROUBLE (Spotlight Series)—Catching two bears, three rattlers and a wild cat for the Chicago Zoo. Paramount.
- f CORAL ISLE OF THE ATLANTIC (World on Parade)—Fine shots of Bermuda. Suggested for schools and libraries. RKO-Radio.
- fj DANGEROUS JOBS—New York window cleaners, news cameramen, etc. Paramount.
- f DEBONAIR NEW ORLEANS—Interesting scenic with the Easy Aces commenting. RKO-Radio.
- fj FIESTA DE SANTA BARBARA, LA—Picturesque celebration, helped out by a lot of movie stars, done in Technicolor. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f HARBOR LIGHTS—Interesting views of activities in the great seaports of the U. S. Vitaphone.
- f JONKER DIAMOND, THE—Interesting exposition of how a great diamond was found and then cut into smaller diamonds. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f MARCH OF TIME NO. 4 OF 1936—The fight for and against the Florida Canal; bird dog champion; organization and activity of the arson squad; Princeton University's organization of the Veterans of Future Wars. Suggested for schools and libraries. RKO.

- f PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 10—French fishermen in the North Atlantic; color pictures of Italian Lakes; an English actor's impersonations of Dickens characters. Paramount.
- f \*PATHE TOPICS NO. 5—Glimpses of Eton; girls doing physical culture in Berlin Zoo; but what makes it worth keeping permanently in circulation is the revival of Robert Benchley's talk on the causes of the depression. RKO-Radio.
- fj TABLE TENNIS—Ping pong as played by experts. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj UNDERGROUND FARMERS (Struggle to Live Series)—About ants and very worth while. RKO-Radio.
- f WINTER AT THE ZOO—Scenes in New York Zoo with amusing comments by the Easy Aces. RKO-Radio.

### CARTOONS

- fj BOLD KING COLE (Felix the Cat)—Amusing. RKO-Radio.
- fj BRIDGE AHOY (Popeye the Sailor)—Popeye builds a bridge and puts the ferry man out of business. Paramount.
- fj ELMER ELEPHANT (Silly Symphony)—A pleasant little short about Little Tillie Tiger's birthday and the shy elephant who proved to be a hero. United Artists.
- fj I-SKI, LOVE-SKI, YOU-SKI (Popeye the Sailor)—Popeye and Olive climb a mountain. Paramount.
- fj \*NEPTUNE NONSENSE (Felix the Cat)—Charming and original fantasy—how a playmate was found for a lonely goldfish. RKO-Radio.
- fj SPARK PLUG—Old friends of the comic strips in a colored cartoon. Columbia.
- fj \*THREE LITTLE WOLVES (Silly Symphony)—The Big Bad Wolf and offspring nearly make away with two of the Little Pigs. United Artists.
- fj WE DIED IT (Betty Boop)—Pudgy the dog gets punished for what the three little kittens did. Paramount.

### COMEDIES, MUSICALS, NOVELTIES AND SERIALS

- f BREEZY RHYTHM—Hal Kemp's orchestra and dancing. Paramount.
- j DARKEST AFRICA (Serial) NOS. 11-15—After many vain attempts to escape from the hidden city Clyde Beatty and his companions succeed through the timely eruption of a volcano. Republic.
- f HOW TO BEHAVE—One of Robert Benchley's amusing sketches—about etiquette this time. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f MAJOR BOWES' AMATEURS ON PARADE NO. 1—Singing and dancing. RKO-Radio.
- f OLD-FASHIONED MOVIE, AN—Amusing, the Easy Aces see an old-time movie. RKO-Radio.
- m PARIS IN NEW YORK—Irene Bordoni in a musical act that is entertaining and fairly novel. Vitaphone.
- fj ROOKIE FIREMAN, THE—Shorty the Chimp becomes a fireman. Paramount.
- fj SECOND CHILDHOOD (Our Gang)—An old lady renews her youth with the children of the neighborhood. Highly amusing.
- f TRIPLE TROUBLE—Ernest Truex in an amusing farce. Educational.
- f WHOLESALING ALONG—A really funny comedy about a man who tried to save money by buying a bathtub wholesale. RKO-Radio.

## The Photoplay as Literary Art

(Continued from page 8)

disappear because the artist can be entrusted with the problem of conveying meaning which is sound and fine and wholesome.

I am not concerned with the direct attack through censorship. It seems to me that is a very devious and dubious way to proceed. It is much better surely to bring to bear upon Hollywood and the other producers the force of an educated public opinion so that little by little we will lift this rather tawdry art into something fine and splendid. It can be done. I have no doubt it will be done.

## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures is a citizen body, organized in 1909 by the People's Institute of New York City as a medium for reflecting intelligent public opinion regarding a growing art and entertainment. This is still the Board's function, together with that of disseminating information on the subject of motion pictures and carrying on a constructive program having to do with community cooperation in the advancement and uses of the motion picture.

The National Board is opposed to legal censorship and is in favor of the community better films plan of placing emphasis upon and building support for the finer and more worthwhile films. It is at all times glad to cooperate with any agency to encourage and guide the motion picture in developing its possibilities both as recreation and as entertainment.

It carries on its work through various committees. All members of the committees serve without pay. No member is connected with the motion picture industry. They are representative of varied interests and activities and many are connected with large public welfare organizations or educational institutions.

The General Committee is a body evolved out of the original group organized in 1909. It is the appeal and central advisory committee of the National Board to which policies are referred and to which decisions of the Review Committee regarding pictures may be carried either by the producers or by the Review Committee itself.

The Executive Committee is composed of members of the General Committee and is the directing body of the National Board, charged with the formulation of policies, the election of members, the expenditure of funds and supervision of all administrative affairs.

The Review Committee is a large group of 300 members carrying on the work of reviewing the films. It is divided into sub-groups which meet for review per schedule during each week in the projection rooms of the various motion picture companies.

The Membership Committee supervises the membership list of the Review Committee and recommends the names of proposed new members for consideration by the Executive Committee.

The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays is composed of critics and students of the cinema interested particularly in encouraging the artistic development of the motion picture. It reviews and publishes a critique of the finest films and assists community groups in the showing of unusual films to special audiences. Its pioneer activity has done much to lay the foundation for the Little Photoplay Theatre movement and to stimulate the organization of subscription groups to develop audiences for the support of the creative achievements of the screen.

## NATIONAL MOTION PICTURE COUNCIL

The community or field work of the National Board of Review is conducted under its National Motion Picture Council, through affiliated membership groups, service contact groups and correspondents throughout the country. The National Council assists in the organization and program of work of local groups which are usually called Councils.

These Councils follow a plan initiated by the National Board in 1916 of having a membership composed of representatives from many organizations, cultural, educational, recreational, religious, and civic, so that they typify the original movement for community participation in the development and best use of the motion picture as recreation and education.

The objectives of such organizations are as follows:

To demonstrate through the education of public opinion, the effectiveness of selection and classification, instead of censorship, as a means of forwarding the development of the motion picture and its best uses.

To encourage through open meetings, forums, classes and other means, the study of the motion picture as a medium of entertainment, education and artistic expression.

To concentrate the attention of the public on specific worthwhile films through the publication of a Photoplay Guide to the selected pictures being currently shown at local theatres.

To arrange family Friday night or week-end programs of selected films, and junior matinees of pictures particularly suited to the tastes of children, through cooperation with local exhibitors.

To endorse and further the use of visual education through motion pictures in the schools.

To arrange and promote occasional exhibitions of exceptional and cultural films that would not normally be shown in the commercial theatres.

### PUBLICATIONS

The National Board of Review and its Council as an aid to the groups carrying out these objectives furnishes an informational service through its publications.

#### National Board of Review Magazine (monthly)

\$2.00 a year for individual subscriptions  
\$1.00 a year to Council or club groups

#### Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures

\$2.50 a year when taken alone, available at a special rate of \$1.00 in conjunction with the Magazine.

#### Selected Pictures Catalog (annual) .....25c

#### Special Film Lists .....10c ea.

Such as Selected Films for Children's Showings, Selected Book-Films, Educational Films, etc.

#### National Board of Review—Its Background, Growth and Present Status.....free

#### National Board of Review—How It Works.....free

#### A Plan and a Program for Community Motion Picture Councils .....free



# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

Vol. XI, No. 6



June, 1936



*"The Plow That Broke the Plain"* (see page 9)

*Published monthly, except July and August, by the  
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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

fj AND SO THEY WERE MARRIED—Melvyn Douglas, Mary Astor, Edith Fellows. Magazine story by Sara Addington. Directed by Elliott Nugent. An amusing comedy of how a man's little boy and a woman's little girl plotted to keep their parents from marrying. The impishness of the kids keeps it lively. Columbia

fj BORDER FLIGHT—John Howard. Based on stories by Ewing Scott. Directed by Otho Lovering. A swift moving and thrilling story of the coast guard's attempt to break up a vicious smuggling ring. Excellent photography and exciting and marvelous flying with a spectacular finish. Paramount.

f BORN TO FIGHT—Frankie Darro, Kane Richmond. Story "To Him Who Dared" by Peter B. Kyne. Directed by Charles Hutchison. A brisk fiction about a prize fighter who has to disappear, and a boy whom he trained for the championship. A fairly sane attitude toward the fighting game. Conn.

f \*BULLETS OR BALLOTS—Edward G. Robinson, Joan Blondell. Screen story by Martin Mooney. Directed by William Keighley. An interesting story of the police clean-up of the racketeers with excellent acting on the part of Edward G. Robinson. First National.

m CASE AGAINST MRS. AMES, THE—Madeleine Carroll, George Brent. Novel by Arthur Somers Roche. Directed by William A. Seiter. An interesting murder mystery. Cleared of a murder charge, a woman cleverly outwits her enemies and brings the real criminal to justice. Dramatic and well acted. Paramount.

f \*CLOISTERED—Best Films. See page 12.

m DEVIL'S SQUADRON, THE—Richard Dix, Karen Morley. Screen story by Dick Grace. Directed by Erle C. Kenton. A story of test pilots, and a woman's growing horror of the sacrifices of life demanded by increased speed in planes. Some good drama, and some effective melodrama. Columbia.

m DRACULA'S DAUGHTER—Otto Kruger, Gloria Holden. Based on "Dracula" by Bram Stoker. Directed by Lambert Hillyer. A highly entertaining and interesting horror story, produced in a dignified manner, carefully directed and well acted. Universal. See page 12.

f FATAL LADY—Mary Ellis, Walter Pidgeon. Screen story by Harry Segal. Directed by Edward Ludwig. An entertaining combination of opera and murder mystery in which an opera star seemingly brings death to the men who love her. Paramount.

f FIRST BABY, THE—Johnny Downs, Shirley Deane. Screen story by Lamar Trotti. Directed by Lewis Seiler. The story of a bride and groom, their in-laws, and the first baby. Very domestic, which ought to characterize it for good or ill, according to one's taste. 20th Century-Fox.

m FORGOTTEN FACES—Herbert Marshall, Gertrude Michael. Story by Richard Washburn Child. Directed by E. A. Dupont. Dramatic story of a father's great sacrifice for his daughter. Sentenced to life imprisonment for the killing of his wife's lover, a man is paroled to look after his young daughter. Paramount.

f GOLDEN ARROW, THE—Bette Davis, George Brent. Story by Michael Arlen. Directed by Alfred E. Green. A light and amusing comedy about a supposed heiress pursued by foreign fortune hunters, and the way she took to escape them. Bright lines, and Bette Davis surprisingly engaged in a comic part. First National.

m IT'S LOVE AGAIN—Jessie Mathews, Robert Young, Sonnie Hale. Screen story by Marion Dix and Lesser Samuels. Directed by Victor Saville. An English musical comedy, a l'Americaine, about an imaginary lady created by a columnist who becomes real in the person of an aspiring young actress. Lively and entertaining, with spots of sophistication, and some excellent dancing numbers. Gaumont-British.

f \*KING STEPS OUT, THE—Grace Moore, Franchot Tone, Walter Connolly. Screen operetta by Gustav Holm, Ernst Decsey, Hubert and Ernst Marishka. Directed by  
(Continued on page 14)



# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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## Mrs. Alonzo Klaw of the Council

The National Council of the National Board of Review is pleased to make announcement of the recent addition of Mrs. Alonzo Klaw to its membership. We asked Mrs. Klaw to tell for these pages something of herself, as we wished to make her known to our readers and field Council members. She has chosen, instead, to tell something she has done which is perhaps just as valuable, because it reveals qualities of enthusiasm, untiring interest and leadership which are most valuable to the Council.



Mrs. Alonzo Klaw

THE past year has given us many remarkable pictures: *Tale of Two Cities* and *Top Hat*, *I Dream Too Much* and *Louis Pasteur*, *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* and *Show Boat* — film fare for the most fastidious, often suitable for the entire family as well as adult audiences. But, unfortunately, the programs accompanying these excellent features are not always so well chosen, and here begins my active interest in the movies and the "Schools Motion Picture Committee."

A little more than a year ago, I took a

group of twelve-year-olds to see *David Copperfield*. Various reviews and recommendations of friends, upon whose taste I could rely, assured me that this was not only one of the most successful products

of the films, but also an ideal choice for the girls who made up my party. But, to my dismay, sandwiched between a charming short and the feature, was the newsreel showing a meretricious sequence of a murder trial, revolting to any normal person, young or old, and the trailer of the next attraction emphasized episodes eminently unsuitable for my young companions.

There are those who argue that most children have decent instincts and the possibilities of good

taste, and that they are better able to sift the good from the bad for themselves than we are to do it for them. This may be perfectly true in the case of books, magazines and newspapers, which may be read or pass-

ed over as the child chooses, but it certainly does not hold good when applied to the movies.

As I sat through that program and watched the response of my young guests to its objectionable phases, I realized that here was no free choice. While they were bored with the trailer and revolted by the horror of that slow march to the electric chair, they were, in effect, forced to pay some attention to them since it was impractical to turn away and do anything else, and as we left the theatre, I wondered if these girls had gained enough from the truly fine *David Copperfield* to offset the effect of the murder pictures and that ugly, vulgar trailer.

A few days later, at a parent-teachers' meeting at Friends' Seminary, the school my daughter attends in New York City, I asked if there were any theatres in New York City beside the Lenox Picture House, which caters almost exclusively to small children, where we could take or send our boys and girls with the assurance that the entire program would be suitable and in good taste. No one knew of such a theatre, so I was appointed chairman of a committee to find one, and I've done little else ever since.

We soon realized that a handful of parents from a small private school like Friends' could accomplish nothing, so we called together representatives from many schools to consider what group action could do. There was not much enthusiasm and little hope. There were Saturday morning showings offered to us by a chain of neighborhood theatres, but the consensus of opinion at that meeting was that only week-end, or at the very least, Saturday afternoon programs, approved in their entirety—shorts, newsreels and trailers, as well as the feature picture—would meet our need. The first manager we approached, at one of the big first-run houses, was most discouraging. He assured us that no one would ever allow us to "meddle" with their best box-office hours and that Saturday afternoon was utterly out of the question. But the manager of the Plaza Theatre, thought well of our plan, and was willing to try it out, and our first approved program was most

generously shown by him one Saturday afternoon last October.

Now, the following May, some 50 public and private schools in greater New York are carrying on their bulletin boards and in their school and parent organization papers, the programs of 34 theatres, and the New York newspapers, the World-Telegram, the Herald Tribune, and the Times print the Schools Motion Picture Committee's recommended lists on Thursday evenings and Friday mornings.

Parents, teachers and managers are working in pleasant co-operation. We know the system is still far from perfect, and are always open to suggestion. But one thing we do know; if parents want better things for their boys and girls, all they need is to go out and ask for them. The motion picture industry is full of forward-looking people, willing to listen, advise, and give us what we want.

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## Young Reviewers at the Boy's Exposition

THE Young Reviewers and representatives from the Metropolitan 4-Star Clubs gave a demonstration meeting of their motion picture appreciation and production work before a large and enthusiastic audience on the evening of June 1st at the Boys' Exposition, in the Hotel Commodore, New York City, the first all-boys' exposition on a big scale ever held anywhere representing the activities of 189 organizations. The picture shown *And So They Were Married*, made available for this special occasion through the co-operation and courtesy of Columbia Pictures, brought forth illuminating comment in the discussion following led by Robert Adams, Jr., a student of Birch Wathen School in New York City. Many of the young people present had never attended a review before, being Exposition visitors who came into the meeting, but they joined in the talk with great interest. An unusual feature of this meeting was the "preview" of a picture on Boys' Club activity made by an affiliated 4-Star group,

(Continued on page 8)



# The German Film Today

By JAMES CARD, JR.

Mr. Card has been interested for some years in foreign films. His first active interest was in behalf of the Shaker Junior Guild of Cleveland, Ohio, which organization planned a series of unusual and foreign films, and this interest he has continued to apply in a widening field of activity. During the past year he studied in Germany, returning early this spring with much information on German films gathered from first hand observation and here he gives us a resume and an opinion on the present German cinema situation from this observation.

UNDER the types of government that are ruling Germany, Italy, and Russia today it is quite impossible to free art from the entanglements of politics. That art is bound to suffer when artists are ordered to "Paint pictures that everyone can understand," as they have been commanded by the German government, is only too unhappily self-evident.

The German film had successfully weathered the transition to sound and demonstrated an ability far above average in using the new medium to a great advantage in such productions as *Karamazov*, *Kameradschaft*, and *M*. The sudden emasculation of the once so powerful German film is rather hard to explain. From among thirty-seven productions viewed over a five month period in Germany, only about five of them could be reasonably considered as meriting preservation. Whereas even five superior films out of thirty-seven would be an encouraging ratio, the pity of the situation is that even the very best of the good films come nowhere near the standards achieved by the masterpieces of the great silent period in Germany, nor even approach the calibre of the pre-Nazi period which produced *Maedchen in Uniform*.

The formerly restless imagination of the German celluloid artists responsible for *Destiny*, *Caligari*, *The Golem*, and all their comrades in glory, seems to have expired with the silent films and the last great flight of fancy in Lang's *By Rocket to the Moon*. Imaginative studio work which once sent Germany so high in cinematic achievement is conspicuous by its regrettable absence. Only in UFA's reconstruction of Thebes

for Willy Fritsch's delightful comedy of the escapades of Jupiter, *Amphitryon*, was I reminded that Germany once led the way in scenic construction.

Perhaps one of the most important of recent German productions is *Faehrmann Maria*, a "tone-film legend." Frank Wybar, the director, with the help of private financial assistance undertook the venture which was frowned upon by the commercial magnates, as chary of the box-office as our own Hollywood business men. The legend was finely concentrated on four characters: Maria, the man, Death, and the violinist. The film, advertised as being symbolic and artistic, was very beautiful and at times moving. Photographed dimly, the moon-washed heaths, the ghostly poplars of the moors made an effective background for Maria to gather her mystic herbs at midnight under the light of the new moon. And sensitive arrangements of traditional weird songs of the heath carried along the atmosphere consistently.

Without the work of Sybille Schmitz as the strange girl, Maria, and the frozen-faced menace of Peter Vosz as Death, the film would have remained nothing more than an exhibition of fine photography. Death is perfectly effective to an accompaniment of music and good lighting. When he speaks, the illusion fades. Pure horror is silent and always will be.

Sybille Schmitz is one of the interesting personalities before German cameras. Formerly typed as a villainess in such roles as Mrs. Cheveley in Wilde's *An Ideal Husband*, she seemed doomed forever to exert the astonishing fascination of her long-jawed face and peculiarly filmatic ability to female heavys. Someone realizing she was an actress cast her as Maria. With a magic as mystical as the power of the herbs that as Maria she gathered in the moonlight to cure her lover, her polish, her suavity fell away; she became a young, mysterious girl of the heath whose love was convincingly stronger than Death. She, to-

gether with Weihmayr on the camera, and Herbert Wind composing the music, made a film.

Had the deportment of Death been as convincing, the film would have been great rather than simply exceptional. A speaking Death is not as terrible as he looks when he is silent. And his horsemen, bare-headed, mounted in the dusk on white horses, somehow convinced one beyond doubt that they wore business suits under their capes.

Why must these good films bear the appearance of pioneering in fields which had been so satisfactorily conquered but a few years before? Has Hitler's political discrimination driven all the art from his country or has Great Britain's cinematic imperialism sucked Germany dry? Thea von Harbou still writes scenarios for UFA but without husband Fritz Lang to direct them, there have been no *Siegfried's* or *Spies* produced. Can the fact that Lang, Fritz Kortner, Conrad Veidt, and Lucie Mannheim work under the Union Jack be an answer? Certainly a partial one. But Werner Krauss who contributed so much to German films and still ranking as Germany's first actor, has apparently returned to the stage indefinitely. No doubt he has the spectacle of Paul Wegener's mediocre failure in *Der Mann mit der Pranke* in his mind when he refuses to step again before the cameras.

The Austrian films are dominated by director-actor Willi Forst. With Pola Negri as his star, Forst directed a hit in *Mazurka*. Apparently not quite sure what he wanted, Forst did strange things with his camera, many very effective. In a dance scene he employed probably the most mobile of cameras. The camera in a strange device was strapped to the actor and actress in turn in such a way that the character actually danced with the camera as it took a close-up all the while with the swinging, shifting background of the dance. As a result the spectator of course became a dancing partner practically gliding right along with the character. Forst supplemented this trick with the good taste of using it only for an instant. As the heroine kisses the villain, the camera is apparently kissing him too; one sees the side of his face and nose ap-

pallingly close; the heroine closes her eyes and the screen is dark until she opens them. Thus the spectator becomes entangled in such a maze of identification that he is not quite sure whether he's the mother, daughter, villain, or just a paid admission.

To return to Germany: Emil Jannings still holds his own as the pride of the Fatherland. As a fierce, furious father, King Frederick William I in *The Old and the Young King*, he merits the pride.

As Professor Niemeyer in *Traumulus*, he reminds one of the eye-rolling and jowl-sagging of *The Way of All Flesh*.

To atone the pillage of German talent by the English, the Germans have seized upon Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw. In a production of *Lady Windemere's Fan*, Lil Dagover as Mrs. Erlynne was the only redeeming feature of an otherwise incompetent cast floundering about as English lords and ladies. *An Ideal Husband* with Brigitte Helm as the too-good wife, Sybille Schmitz as the scheming Mrs. Cheveley, and Georg Alexander as the flippant Lord Goring was outstanding. A triumph was advertised in the acquisition of the rights to Shaw's *Pygmalion*. They crow over the fact that even while Shaw was personally besieged by a delegation from Hollywood after *Pygmalion* rights, he granted them to a German company as a result of a letter from young producer Klagemann who as the press agents remind us "had no giant American concern behind him . . . and stated simply what he wanted, made no phantastic promises and appealed to the loyalty of the poet." The film with Jenny Jugo as the flower girl was a tremendous success.

A depression story as nicely conceived as *Little Man What Now?* was filmed under the title *Liebesleute* with Gustav Froelich, Renate Mueller, and Hans Adalbert von Schlettow appearing briefly and impressively as the menace. Why Schlettow, who will be remembered as Stenka Rasin in *Volga Volga*, and as Hagen in *Siegfried*, as well as the dependable Theodore Loos, also of *Siegfried*, are not used oftener and to better advantage is hard to understand. Lil Da-

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# The Motion Picture's Part in America's Changing Musical Appreciation

By LAWRENCE TIBBETT

*Increasingly more thought is being given to music as it comes to us by way of the films, and for this reason we believe it will be of particularly pertinent interest to quote here at length from what Mr. Lawrence Tibbett had to say regarding music and the motion picture in his address on "Changing Tastes in American Music," delivered at the Fourth Annual New York Herald-Tribune Conference on Current Problems. Mr. Tibbett, as we know, speaks from wide experience on the operatic and concert stage, the radio and the motion picture screen.*

MUSIC in America is undergoing a gradual but perceptible change. From an exotic growth, it is slowly being transformed into a native organism.

To enter into a discussion of "The Changing Standards in American Music" would seem to indicate that in American music there has been an established standard—or, to be more precise, shall we say an established character. That, unfortunately, has not been the case.

We still can find no body of music literature which may be said to be unmistakably American. We still can discover no culture which may be said to represent the *whole* of America. But indications are not lacking that the day is coming when America will emerge as a homogeneous entity.

Many forces are conspiring to effect the crystallization of a diffused America into a more sharply defined America. The passage of time alone is working its magic in promoting the assimilation of the immigrant classes and in gradually erasing the most pronounced foreign aspects of the first and second generation Americans. Also, the restrictions Congress has placed on immigration are aiding this process.

Modern means of transportation, which have made us the most mobile people in the world, have broken down the isolation of communities; and in the loss of this isolation, with the consequent intercourse of widely separated groups, stubborn provincialism and old racial traits are slowly being worn away.

The motion picture and the radio are providing a common dramatic and musical fare

for the people of the whole country. And here is something worth considering for a moment. Before the motion picture and radio era, there was no form of entertainment (cultural entertainment, if you wish) which reached the entire public from coast to coast. There was no theatrical or musical entertainment which could commonly be enjoyed by those of low and high degree, by those in rural districts as well as those in the larger centres.

The motion picture and radio have changed this situation. A picture released from Hollywood may in the same week give pleasure to the President in Washington or to a gum-chewing charwoman. A radio program broadcast from New York may simultaneously delight the inhabitants of a San Francisco penthouse or a Bowery flop-house.

Now, there are still those who sniff at the movies and the radio because they are not *art*. But art is no artificial wax flower fashioned in a studio. All art must grow primarily from the soil, which is the people. And the universal appeal of the motion picture and the radio is a most hopeful portent for the development of an American art. Because of the very universality of this appeal, the movies and radio may form a starting point from which the whole people (having there first met together) may progress to other and higher expressions.

The support of music itself is passing from the hands of the few to the great public; that same great public created by the formerly despised movie and the at present questioned radio. This great public may not yet have arrived at the point of fully developed powers of discrimination, but its interest in music is fresh and vital, and it decidedly knows its own tastes. The American artist, with his American background and intimate contact with life as generally lived in this country, instinctively knows how to give pleasure to this public. And because the American public is imperious in demanding satisfaction, the American artist will gain more and more success

since he is best equipped to provide that satisfaction.

By no means the least interesting and significant contribution of American composers at present is in the field of popular music, which I consider to be our real American folk music. American dance music and songs have influenced more than one European composer of high position, and, like the movies, have cast their spell over many a foreign populace. I believe our popular music will prove the seed from which a typical music will grow.

## The German Film Today

(Continued from page 6)

gover is still highly popular and no one is busier.

It is dismaying that political propaganda is creeping into Germany's films—as yet rarely, but apparently the practice is gaining ground. A tired and worn-looking Lillian Harvey was reunited with Willy Fritsch in the decidedly poor *Black Roses*, a painfully patriotic film concerning Sweden's struggle and final revolt against Russian tyranny. And in *Frisenot*, the Russian actor, Inkijinoff of *Storm Over Asia* leads the Russian villains who receive the full hatred of the film's preachment against the Soviets.

Ironically, the finest achievement of German film art today is their technique of dubbing a German sound track to foreign productions. An institution of wizard specialists in preparing the dubbed sound track, choose not only the German words fitting the meanings of the spoken foreign dialogue, but those which will fit the lip-movements of the actors as well! This task sounds impossible. Yet with traditional German thoroughness they do their work so well that only a practised lip-reader can catch the discrepancies. Tom Mix spoke a perfect southern German dialect. Try as I would all through *The Crusades* I could not detect the lips of Wilcoxon nor Loretta Young making a single movement out of harmony with the perfect German which one heard but realized they were not speaking. The climax was the German version of *David Copperfield* in which I heard Da-

vid not only speaking German, but with the same voice quality, the same sensitive inflections that characterized Freddie Bartholomew's work!

Thus a technical mockery of art remains today the only superiority that apparently Germany can claim over the rest of the filming world. Where once they blazed exciting trails, they are now but laboratory followers. May Germany speedily seek out her film sickness, overcome it whatever it may be, and experience the re-birth of cinematic imagination she deserves.

## Do You Like Duals?

WARNER BROS. are inviting one and all to express themselves on a matter in which cinema-goers all are interested and upon which many have undoubtedly expressed themselves numerous times, but in merely a conversational way, saying "I do like or I do not like double features." Now the chance is being given to express opinion in such a way as to furnish helpful data where it is being sought for Warner Bros. are conducting a national survey of public attitude on the practice of presenting two film features on one program. If you haven't taken advantage of this opportunity through your local motion picture group or newspaper you can secure a questionnaire sheet from Mr. A. Charles Einfeld, Director of Advertising Publicity of Warner Bros., at 321 West 44th Street, New York City on which to record your "aye" or "nay" for dual features. The survey closes June 15th and you may render your judgment either on the questionnaire provided or by writing a card or letter stating how you feel and why about this prevalent practice in motion picture exhibition.

(Continued from page 4)

the Central High Photoplay Club of Newark, N. J., especially for this Exposition under the direction of the advisor, Mr. Alexander B. Lewis. The filming, editing and titling, and projection were capably handled by the young boys of the group and the benefit of boys' clubs was strikingly pictured for the audience.



# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS

## DEPARTMENT

This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of Exceptional and Honorable

Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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## The Plow That Broke the Plain

*Written and directed by Pare Lorentz, photographed by Ralph Steiner, Leo Hurwitz and Paul Strand, musical score by Virgil Thomson, orchestra directed by Alexander Smallens. Produced by the Resettlement Administration of the United States Government.*

THIS documentary film-with-a-purpose has been meeting with difficulties and complaints, on the ground that it is propaganda and on the ground that it is not entertainment. It is propaganda, and intended to be (though the word propaganda has of late years taken on sinister meanings, implying the spreading of obnoxious doctrines), in the sense that it was made for a specific educational purpose: to explain the reason for the devastating dust-storms in the middle west, and to warn the country of what is sure to come in the future if effective steps are not taken at once to save that vast stretch of America from becoming a desert. But, though propaganda (not, however, partisan propaganda), it is nevertheless entertainment, unless you narrow that term down to exclude what is profoundly interesting and moving simply because it is not amusing. Essentially it is like an episode in *The March of Time*, important news put together in dramatic form, with a definite consideration of cause and effect. It is as dramatic as anything could be—the struggle between man and nature, with greed and carelessness weighing the balance against man.

The importance of the film aside from its purpose is the surprising artistic skill

with which it has been made—surprising because one does not expect anything so utilitarian in intention to bother to be artistic, or even to see how much its utility may be enhanced by the recreated life that only art can give it.

The film begins with a picture of the plains when they were a cattlemen's paradise, goes on to the cutting up of those lands into farms, then to the terrific demands made upon the soil when the war sent the price of wheat soaring and the land was bled lifeless. With no grass to hold the soil together and conserve the meagre moisture from the infrequent rains, there was nothing to act as protection against the high winds, and smothering dust-storms came. They will come and come again unless some vast agency like the government manages to make grass grow there again. And meantime there are all the homeless people driven from their farms because the land is no longer possible to farm.

There is something really epic about the film—as epic and American as *The Covered Wagon*—but the climax is not a victory but a threatened defeat. The men behind the cameras did marvels, considering that they were not on the spot all during the long stretch of years their story covers, and what supplementary film could be collected is used with the highest effectiveness. The juxtaposition of scenes, cut so that they create their own visual comment, is always good, and especially where the flashing back and forth between tanks and tractors in the war sequence says something far more effectually than words could say it. A vocal commentator performs the miracle of being

both informative and unobtrusive, and of making his words a part of the picture, and the whole thing is held together by a remarkably eloquent musical score, unifying it and heightening, enormously, its emotional content.

It is a thoroughly patriotic film, and everybody with an interest in saving a large and threatened part of our country should wish it to be seen as widely and frequently as possible. People can learn from it something they did not know about national conservation, and something few would have expected about the unforeseen costs of war.

## We Are from Kronstadt

*Written by Vsevolod Vishnevsky, directed by E. Dzigan, photographed by N. Naumov-Straj, musical score by N. Kriukov. Produced by Mosfilm, distributed by Amkino.*

### The cast

<i>Vasily Martinov, Commissar of the Kronstadt</i>	
<i>Expeditionary Naval Division</i>	<i>V. Zaichikov</i>
<i>Artem Balashov, a sailor</i>	<i>G. Buschuev</i>
<i>Vasily Burmistrov, a Red Army soldier</i>	<i>N. Ivakin</i>
<i>Y. Draudin, Commander of the Petrograd</i>	
<i>Rifle Regiment</i>	<i>O. Jakov</i>
<i>Valentin Besprozvanny</i>	<i>P. Kirilov</i>
<i>Anton Karabash</i>	<i>E. Gunn</i>
<i>Yunga</i>	<i>Misha Gurienko</i>
<i>White Guard</i>	<i>F. Seleznev</i>
<i>Liven von Vitten, Lieutenant of His Serene</i>	
<i>Highness' Division</i>	<i>P. Soboloevsky</i>

THIS is a picture of the Civil War in Russia, the war between the Red and White Armies, when Petrograd—as it was called then—was in danger of capture by the White general, Yudenich, and was saved for the Bolsheviks by the marines from Kronstadt.

When the lads who think up the extra-special words for the cinema find the term that will mean for a movie what "good theatre" means for a play, it won't be a bad term to use for *We Are From Kronstadt*. An even better term is what the trade uses, "good box-office." For even when they are hidden away under brilliant photography and the unfamiliar aspect of Russian players there are theatrical devices that invariably pull at the sympathies of an audience, as they are intended to do. When

they are too obvious they are called hokum: even at their best they are more theatrical than dramatic, more contrived than alive. But crowds usually like them.

Crowds like *We Are From Kronstadt*. It is full of things that strike familiar chords, though the key may be different. The Red Marines are the rescuers, just as the American leathernecks always are. The marines look down on the infantry—there is a sort of Flagg-Quirt rivalry between the sailor and soldier, starting over a woman. There is even a hero who starts in by being a rebel against discipline and ends by being the most articulately patriotic of all, exhorting and quoting Lenin like an old-timer—and the cynical observer recalls Dick Powell and Dick Cromwell and all the other Dicks of the annual Army-Navy series who start by scoffing and fade out waving the flag.

There's an undeniable economy in following these well-greased grooves into the audience's heart, if the audience is an American one of the customary sort. Submerged memories of McLaglen-Lowe and Cagney-O'Brien feuds create a substantial basis of understanding for Artem and Vasily, and you can sit back in the comfortable expectation that they will squabble energetically through the whole story, with many an incidental laugh, and come out friends in the end. But the woman will throw you off. She doesn't follow the American pattern. The first sight of her foreshadows sex interest: she has just been left by a man on the embankment and stands there eating what looks like a piece of candy, dressed with some bedraggled fur that summons up promising ghosts of Sadie Thompson or one of von Sternberg's less affluent street ladies. Her repulse of the marine is just the sort of thing that is always happening to Cagney when he gets fresh. Surely a rough sort of romance is budding. But presently, without her fur and singing a lullaby, she is a madonna, her romantic appeal has vanished and she slips into the background as an earnest but inconspicuous helper of the Red Army until she provides the final laugh by being revealed as the Commander's wife.



There are other laughs—the kid with the fresh taunt when the marine is knocked into a lamp-post, the likeable little orphans prowling around like curious kittens among the sleeping soldiers, the escaping marine dressed in woman's clothes and luring the ardent White infantryman into a shed. But they are not the kind of laughs that come from deep down in human nature, as they did in *Chapayev*. They are gag laughs. And a strange habit of audiences is that once their laugh muscles are limbered up they have to keep working: any kind of incongruity tickles them, and presently, in a fine battle scene, with bullets knocking soldiers into grotesque shapes of death as they fall, the theatre resounds with hearty guffaws, just as if killing were a variety of slapstick.

All this business of comic relief, entertaining enough for the most part except for its unfortunate effect of putting the audience into a mood for more laughs than the film provides, is a part of a theatrical quality that runs through the whole picture.

Here is an important and thrilling episode in Russia's revolutionary history, before the Soviets finally got well established, when Yudenich and his men seriously threatened Petrograd. There are three separate movements to it. First with the ships, which amounts to little more than some stunning pictures—subtitles tell all that happened. Then an engagement between the Reds and Whites, fighting to hold a strip of coast outside the city. After an initial success the Red marines are left to hold the heights, they are surprised and captured by the enemy, and, instead of being shot, weighted with stones and pushed over the cliff into the sea. Finally, with the city on the verge of being captured, Artem—the one man to escape the wholesale drowning—manages to get to Kronstadt and bring the men of the Baltic Fleet to the rescue.

There is plenty of stirring action in all this, especially in the middle part, where victory hangs long in the balance and fine heroism holds defeat away magnificently, till the surprising catastrophe that ends in the terrifying scene of final extinction. A scene that grabs you by the throat and chokes

you. After that, of course, everything is anti-climax—the punishment of the defeated Whites by pushing them, too, over the cliff, has no kick in it, it merely rounds out the film patly.

But strangely enough, with all this stirring action, what you remember is not an important part of the Soviet struggle, and the spirit that brought it victory, but a number of scenes, composed with great effectiveness and photographed by a master of the camera. Theatrical. Theatrical because they are on the surface, artfully contrived but no inevitable part of a deeply swelling dramatic movement. Time after time they flash brilliantly on the screen. Battleship smoke against a sky. The looming fortresses of Kronstadt. The Commissar rallying his men to the attack and their advance, singing, till their song changes to a long insane yell as they lunge forward through the smoke. The minute soldier creeping alone toward the terrifying machinery of an advancing tank. Incomparable shots of close fighting and quick death. The marine burying his drowned commander beneath the cliff—and here music and the sound of the sea combine to create one of the most impressive parts of the film. The woman alone in the trench, with a line of soldiers creeping inexorably toward her. The marines disembarking and marching through the surf.

Arresting and often memorable scenes, but they do not articulate together to make a moving whole. The gags interrupt them, and so do several stock, sentimental figures: a mother, a boy who enlists, for instance—not individualized enough to have any life of their own and depending for effect on the supposition that any ragged mother, any boy doing something conventionally heroic, is necessarily a touching sight.

But most of all there is some spirit lacking in the film that we have come to expect from these Soviet pictures. A sincerity, an honesty of feeling, that has vivified much cruder films, technically, and made them inescapably genuine. This lack is more apparent because there are no actors of the caliber of those in *Chapayev* and its successors to hold the thing together with the

illusion that actual human beings are living in it. Somehow its soul is missing, which makes it, for all its flashes of brilliance, only an imitation of the Russian masterpieces.

The trend of the more recent Russian films (it got going in *Counterplan*), to turn from the mass to the individual, but to make the individual, for all his highly characteristic individuality, a representative and summation of the mass, has gone astray in this film of Dzigan's. There are plenty of individuals in it, and they have surface aspects of individuality, as one might wear a moustache and another a white cap or carry a guitar. But they never seem living atoms of a living mass. And that is probably why, on the whole, the film seems soul-less and not genuinely moving. Without that mass vitality and aspiration the revolutionary fire is gone. An artificial light, however sparkling, cannot do in place of it.

J. S. H.

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## Lady Vampire

OF course it is true that there are far more immediately human themes for the movies to concern themselves with than vampires, but it is also a fact that the Shiver School of melodrama has a wide appeal as entertainment. The trouble with most of the examples of this school is that they require the shiver-lover to park his intelligence outside when he tries to satisfy this appeal. The corpses and cobwebs and underground passages and murky landscapes are usually pretty stagey, and the plots built upon a worn-out formula. *Dracula's Daughter* has the virtue that in the beginning it promises to be somewhat different, and the fault that that promise isn't fulfilled.

It appears, as no one but a movie producer looking for a sequel would have suspected, that the famed Dracula had a daughter, afflicted with the family weakness for sleeping in a coffin all day and prowling around by night to find victims to satisfy her unfortunate, and literal, blood thirst. But she longs to be free of this obsession, and for

that reason she is a person who can engage our pity and sympathy. Moreover, a psychiatrist becomes interested in her case, and the feeble hope begins to glimmer that by some miracle a movie is going to show us something of the inside of a mind diseased, and that she may be scientifically cured.

No such luck. And of course it is too much to expect of a hard-working scenario writer. It would call for special knowledge and extra-special imagination. But how far more shivery and terrifying it would be to get inside a mad mind that knew it was mad and was trying to be sane! Instead we have everything cleaned up neatly and tritely by a little massacre.

Anything so deeply embedded in the superstitions of the race as vampirism is (and its hold on the imagination is still tremendous) must have in it the stuff for something much more important than paste-board melodrama. *Dracula's Daughter* is a tiny, stumbling step beyond the usual thing. And Gloria Holden is nothing short of stunning.

J.S.H.

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## Cloistered

WITH dignity and serenity the layman is shown for the first time in history the life of the cloistered nuns. This film *Cloistered*, or as it is known in the French version *Les Cloitres*, was made at the mother house of the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd in Angers, France, with the permission of Pope Pius XI. The filming extended over two years during which time the photographer Robert Alexandre took occasional and beautiful unposed shots which in the end produced the daily life of the Good Shepherd Sisters from the time a young girl enters as a postulant until she takes her final perpetual vows five and a half years later. Although *Cloistered* perhaps will have the greatest appeal to Catholic audiences it will nevertheless answer a good many questions that continually arise among non-Catholics. The picture has an excellently prepared and delivered narration by Rev. Father Matthew Kelly.—P.H.



# Book Reviews

## Film and Theatre

By ALLARDYCE NICOLL

*Reviewed by James Shelley Hamilton*

IN this eminently readable and sensible book the Professor of the History of Drama at Yale does just what would reasonably be expected from the title; quite disinterestedly and methodically he compares the screen and the stage, trying to discover resemblances and differences, and to distinguish the special qualities inherent and pregnant in each medium. His researches lead him to conclusions that amount to a defense of the movies as an important branch of art—an able and convincing defense.

That the book is going to be reasonably defensive—but not apologetic—is foreshadowed in the introductory comparison of the conditions influencing present-day movie making with those under which the Elizabethan drama labored before it came to full flower in Shakespeare. The likeness is astonishing, and the attitudes of moralists and esthetes in the two periods are just as similar. The inference is that the movies, instead of being fatally restricted by the necessity of popular appeal, draw their greatest vitality from that necessity, and that in time they are bound to produce their cinematic Shakespeare.

From that as a starting point Professor Nicoll proceeds to examine the basis and methods of the motion picture, understandingly and understandably, with refreshingly little reliance on the critical jargon that cinema esthetes are prone to affect. Such fundamental things as cinematic movement (the cardinal point of difference between screen-plays and stage-plays, on which even most professed critics need enlightenment), filmic space and time, film reality, rhythm, the use of sound—all of these find clarification in Professor Nicoll's discussion of them, with examples drawn from contemporary films. Montage—that vague and much-used word—appears to be least clearly under-

stood: it is the least clearly defined, in the sense with which the Russian originators of the term seem to use it.

The book makes no attempt to supplant more detailed histories of the development of the motion picture, commercially and artistically, or such professional analysis of method as Pudovkin's "Film Technique," but as an exposition for the real movie-lover of what the motion picture really is and can be it is exceedingly valuable. A good, though not wholly accurate, bibliography, which does not pretend to be complete, supplements this excellent book.

*Published by Thomas Y. Crowell Co. Price, \$2.50.*

## Educational Film Catalog and Motion Picture Review Digest

AN "Educational Film Catalog" has been added to the Standard Catalog Series of the H. W. Wilson Co. Very few catalogs of educational films have reached the stage of bound covers, being usually small paper pamphlets or mimeographed sheets, but this listing of 1175 non-theatrical films has been given all the importance of a book, containing 134 pages of educational film information between its brilliant yellow covers. The information includes 100 pages of film listings by subject classification, a title and subject index, a directory of producers and of distributors and an outline of the Dewey Decimal classification according to which system the films are classified. This last information for the special use of libraries and other institutions following this system in their book classifications, shows that the Wilson Co., which has long been the publisher of many book catalogs and indexes, believes the educational film is going to receive the same attention as printed material from these institutions.

The compilers of this Catalog realize they are dealing here with a constantly changing medium and admit an incompleteness in the listing, but as it is planned to bring the Catalog up-to-date through the publication of quarterly supplements—this is not intended as full or final information on educational films.

The Catalog is priced at \$2, with the supplements for two years \$4 and is available from The H. W. Wilson Company, 950 University Avenue, New York City.

The Wilson Company has also entered the field of the entertainment film in its "Motion Picture Review Digest," a publication started several months ago. It comes out in weekly form containing, as the name indicates, a digest of motion picture review and evaluation from various motion picture publications and specialized publications carrying motion picture information. The weekly issues are accumulated from time to time so that more extensive information is available in one volume. This publication aims to do for motion pictures what the Book Review Digest, which has been published for thirty years, does for books. The response which has come to the Motion Picture Digest, we learn from the publisher, has been an encouragingly favorable one. This offers once more proof of the recognition of the growing importance of the motion picture on the part of the especially book-interested public. Subscription price is \$4 a year. Full information regarding these two services can be secured by those interested from the publisher.—B. G.

## Selected Pictures Guide

(Continued from page 2)

Joseph von Sternberg. An attractive, romantic operetta, laid in Austria, with Fritz Kreisler music. Though the plot is slight and unoriginal, the action is lively and gay, with frequent comic bits that are very laughable. Columbia.

- f LAST OUTLAW, THE—Harry Carey, Hoot Gibson. Screen story by John Twist and Jack Townley. Directed by Christy Cabanne. An interesting story of the last of the bad men who having spent 25 years in prison, finds it hard to accustom himself to the changes. Henry B. Walthal as the old-time sheriff is excellent. RKO-Radio.
- m LAW IN HER HANDS, THE—Margaret Lindsay, Warren Hull. Screen story by George Bricker. Directed by William Clements. Dramatic romance of a young woman lawyer. Matching her wits with the man who is in love with her she finds herself in the center of a sensational murder trial. First National.
- f LET'S SING AGAIN—Henry Armetta, Bobby Breen. Screen story by Don Swift. Directed by Kurt Neuman. A story about an opera singer and his little boy—also a singer—who get separated and finally reunite. Ready-made for a boy soprano who is inexperienced as an actor, but people will like his voice. RKO-Radio.
- f MINE WITH THE IRON DOOR, THE—Richard Arlen, Cecilia Parker, Henry B. Walthal. Novel by Harold Bell Wright. Directed by David Howard. A story of buried treasure in Arizona, interesting and with the novelty of a man who serves the purpose of a villain, though from highly idealistic motives. Columbia.
- f NOBODY'S FOOL—Edward Everett Horton. Story by Frank Mitchell Dazey. Directed by Arthur Collins. A highly amusing comedy with excellent dialogue about an ex-waiter who comes to New York to enter big real estate business and though seemingly very dumb he manages to outwit some unscrupulous operators. Universal.
- f PRINCESS COMES ACROSS, THE—Carole Lombard, Fred MacMurray. Screen story by Phillip McDonald. Directed by William K. Howard. An entertaining and smoothly running comedy drama placed on board an ocean liner. The story deals with an actress posing as a princess and a band leader who falls in love with her, and their troubles when they become involved in three murders. Good dialogue. Paramount.
- m PRIVATE NUMBER—Loretta Young, Robert Taylor. Play "Common Clay" by Cleves Kincaid. Directed by Roy Del Ruth. The plot, about rich parents who try to annul their son's marriage to a servant girl, is hardly new, but the production—direction and acting—is good enough to give it new life. 20th Century-Fox.
- f SECRET PATROL—Charles Starrett. Story by Peter B. Kyne. Directed by David Selman. A story of the Mounties and the North woods, with some interesting entanglements arising from the hero's being made to pose as what he really was. Columbia.
- m SHE DEVIL ISLAND—Carmen Guerrero. Directed by Raphael J. Sevilla. An interesting picture. A young Spaniard leaves his island home and his fishing to seek a fortune in pearls. Excellent photography of the sea, interesting native dancing and good singing. First Division.
- f \*SHOW BOAT—Irene Dunne, Allan Jones. From the novel by Edna Ferber. Directed by James Whale. The popular entertaining musical drama of the old showboat days on the Mississippi with the original "Cap'n Andy"—Charles Winniger. The music is charming and the production has an excellent supporting



cast including Helen Morgan and Paul Robeson. Universal.

- fj SONS O' GUNS—Joe E. Brown, Joan Blondell, Eric Blore. Play by Fred Thompson and Jack Donahue. Directed by Lloyd Bacon. Joe E. Brown becomes an involuntary soldier in the great war. Amusing farce comedy, sometimes satirical, often hilarious. Warner.
- f THREE WISE GUYS—Robert Young, Betty Furness, Richard Walburn. Story by Damon Runyon. Directed by George B. Seitz. Three people who set out to shake down a millionaire's son—with interesting and amusing results. Lively and entertaining, with many pleasant individual touches. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f TROUBLE FOR TWO—Robert Montgomery, Rosalind Russell, Frank Morgan. Story "The Suicide Club" by Robert Louis Stevenson. Directed by J. Walter Rubin. An entertaining costume romance of a mythical kingdom and the crown prince's adventures in London, with an exiled revolutionary for villain. The combination of comedy and creepy melodrama is what gives it its attraction, the main plot being pretty much of a stock affair. Beautiful production and many clever actors. Suggested for schools and libraries. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

## Foreign Language Films

- f RAGGEN, DET AR JAG DET (Raggen, That's Me)—Isa Quensel. Novel by Gunnar Widegren. Directed by S. Bauman. A pleasant comedy of a girl who didn't want to fall in love but did. Done in Swedish, with all the Swedish perfection of atmosphere, acting, and photographic technique. Scandinavian.
- f SVERIGE RUNT PA 15 MINUTER (Around Sweden in 15 Minutes)—Just what the title says, and good. Scandinavian.
- f UTFLYKT TILL TANNFORSSEN, EN (A Visit to Tannforsen Falls)—Good scenic. Scandinavian.

## Short Subjects

### INFORMATIONALS

- fj FAST FRIENDS—For dog lovers. Educational.
- f GOLFING RHYTHM—Amusing sport item. Columbia.
- f GOING PLACES NOS. 21-23—A trip to South Africa; the Holy Land; and Egypt. Universal.
- f IRONS IN THE FIRE (Our Own U. S. Series)—Things made of wood. Vitaphone.
- f MARCH OF TIME NO. 5 OF 1936—Preparation of the ballyhoo for the coming election; Mussolini's conquest of Ethiopia in spite of the League of Nations; the development of railways spurred by motor competition. RKO-Radio.
- fj NEVER CATCH THE RABBIT—Bill Corum and racing dogs. RKO-Radio.
- fj POODLES—Showing thoroughbred poodles. Paramount.
- f PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 11—Making champagne; mountain climbers. Paramount.
- f POPULAR SCIENCE NO. 5—An interesting color picture showing the advance in science in many fields. Paramount.
- fj RACING CANINES—Interesting pictures about racing dogs, and amusing comments. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f STRANGER THAN FICTION NOS. 20-23—Strange events and people all over the world. Universal.
- f VACATION SPOTS (Our Own U. S. Series)—Various vacation places and their sports. Vitaphone.
- f WE EAT TO LIVE (Our Own U. S. Series)—America's food supply. Vitaphone.

## Your Attention Please

THIS is the last issue of the Magazine until fall and we want to suggest a substitute service. Many of our readers will be away from their homes during the summer but they will undoubtedly be going to the movies and will want the information on the selected pictures wherever they are. Others will be at home continuing some active motion picture interest either in theatre attendance or in work with the local community motion picture organization although that organization's study programs may be discontinued for the season. These latter will especially need the information on the selected pictures. Therefore we will make the WEEKLY GUIDE TO SELECTED PICTURES available to our subscribers who wish it for the period when the magazine is not published. Please let us know if you desire this Guide and where you wish to have it sent, all you need to do to get it is to write.

### CARTOONS

- fj BINGO CROSBYANA—In color. Vitaphone.
- j COBWEB HOTEL—Color cartoon of a spider who caught flies in his hotel. Paramount.
- fj EARLY BIRD AND THE WORM, THE—Charming, in color. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f I DON'T WANT TO MAKE HISTORY (Bouncing Ball)—Vincent Lopez's orchestra. Paramount.
- fj LET IT BE ME (Merrie Melody)—Vitaphone.
- f MAJOR GOOGLE—Barney Google burlesquing the Major Bowes' amateur hour. Columbia.
- f \*OLD MILL POND—Excellent color cartoon with striking burlesques of many famous jazz bands and their leaders. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj SONG A DAY, A (Betty Boop)—Betty and Grampy cure their patients with song and dance. Paramount.
- fj WHAT—NO SPINACH!—Popeye the Sailor. Paramount.

### COMEDIES, MUSICALS, SERIALS

- fj ARBOR DAY—Our Gang takes part in the school pageant for Arbor Day. Funny—some of it very funny. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f BAD MEDICINE—Amusing comedy of a medicine show, with songs. RKO-Radio.
- f CHANGING OF THE GUARD—A man tells his grandchild stories—in color. Vitaphone.
- f DUMMY ACHE—Edgar Kennedy in an amusing comedy of a triangle situation with a dummy for the third side. RKO-Radio.
- f INTERNATIONAL BROADCAST—Vaudeville with Teddy Bergman as master of ceremonies. Universal.
- f LITTLE BOY BLUE—Chic Sale. A touching little piece founded on Eugene Field's poem, done with the elaborate care that might have been given to a feature picture. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj LUCKY STARLETS—Youthful stars singing and dancing. Paramount.
- f MAJOR BOWES ON PARADE NO. 2—Singing and dancing by amateurs. RKO-Radio.
- f MEET THE KERNEL—Singing and dancing. Vitaphone.
- f PAN HANDLERS—Patsy Kelly and Pert Kelton in a laughable farce. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- j PHANTOM RIDER, THE, NOS. 1-2 (Serial)—Serial of the West. Buck Jones plays the part of a ranger and a mysterious phantom who helps the ranchers against the cattle rustlers. Universal.
- f VINCENT LOPEZ AND HIS ORCHESTRA—Vitaphone.
- f YANKEE DOODLE RHAPSODY—Ferde Grofe and his orchestra play well known American songs. Paramount.

## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures is a citizen body, organized in 1909 by the People's Institute of New York City as a medium for reflecting intelligent public opinion regarding a growing art and entertainment. This is still the Board's function, together with that of disseminating information on the subject of motion pictures and carrying on a constructive program having to do with community cooperation in the advancement and uses of the motion picture.

The National Board is opposed to legal censorship and is in favor of the community better films plan of placing emphasis upon and building support for the finer and more worthwhile films. It is at all times glad to cooperate with any agency to encourage and guide the motion picture in developing its possibilities both as recreation and as entertainment.

It carries on its work through various committees. All members of the committees serve without pay. No member is connected with the motion picture industry. They are representative of varied interests and activities and many are connected with large public welfare organizations or educational institutions.

The General Committee is a body evolved out of the original group organized in 1909. It is the appeal and central advisory committee of the National Board to which policies are referred and to which decisions of the Review Committee regarding pictures may be carried either by the producers or by the Review Committee itself.

The Executive Committee is composed of members of the General Committee and is the directing body of the National Board, charged with the formulation of policies, the election of members, the expenditure of funds and supervision of all administrative affairs.

The Review Committee is a large group of 300 members carrying on the work of reviewing the films. It is divided into sub-groups which meet for review per schedule during each week in the projection rooms of the various motion picture companies.

The Membership Committee supervises the membership list of the Review Committee and recommends the names of proposed new members for consideration by the Executive Committee.

The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays is composed of critics and students of the cinema interested particularly in encouraging the artistic development of the motion picture. It reviews and publishes a critique of the finest films and assists community groups in the showing of unusual films to special audiences. Its pioneer activity has done much to lay the foundation for the Little Photoplay Theatre movement and to stimulate the organization of subscription groups to develop audiences for the support of the creative achievements of the screen.

## NATIONAL MOTION PICTURE COUNCIL

The community or field work of the National Board of Review is conducted under its National Motion Picture Council, through affiliated membership groups, service contact groups and correspondents throughout the country. The National Council assists in the organization and program of work of local groups which are usually called Councils.

These Councils follow a plan initiated by the National Board in 1916 of having a membership composed of representatives from many organizations, cultural, educational, recreational, religious, and civic, so that they typify the original movement for community participation in the development and best use of the motion picture as recreation and education.

The objectives of such organizations are as follows:

To demonstrate through the education of public opinion, the effectiveness of selection and classification, instead of censorship, as a means of forwarding the development of the motion picture and its best uses.

To encourage through open meetings, forums, classes and other means, the study of the motion picture as a medium of entertainment, education and artistic expression.

To concentrate the attention of the public on specific worthwhile films through the publication of a Photoplay Guide to the selected pictures being currently shown at local theatres.

To arrange family Friday night or week-end programs of selected films, and junior matinees of pictures particularly suited to the tastes of children, through cooperation with local exhibitors.

To endorse and further the use of visual education through motion pictures in the schools.

To arrange and promote occasional exhibitions of exceptional and cultural films that would not normally be shown in the commercial theatres.

### PUBLICATIONS

The National Board of Review and its Council as an aid to the groups carrying out these objectives furnishes an informational service through its publications.

#### National Board of Review Magazine (monthly)

\$2.00 a year for individual subscriptions  
\$1.00 a year to Council or club groups

#### Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures

\$2.50 a year when taken alone, available at a special rate of \$1.00 in conjunction with the Magazine.

#### Selected Pictures Catalog (annual) .....25c

#### Special Film Lists .....10c ea.

Such as Selected Films for Children's Showings,  
Selected Book-Films, Educational Films, etc.

#### National Board of Review—Its Background, Growth and Present Status.....free

#### National Board of Review—How It Works.....free

#### A Plan and a Program for Community Motion Picture Councils .....free



# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE



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Leslie Howard and Norma Shearer as "Romeo and Juliet" (see page 6)

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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

- f BACK TO NATURE—The Jones Family. Screenplay by Robert Ellis and Helen Logan. Directed by James Tinling. The Jones Family spend their vacation in a trailer, the most entertaining picture of the series so far. 20th Century-Fox.
- fj DEVIL IS A Sissy, THE—See Exceptional Photoplays Department, page 7.
- m DON'T TURN 'EM LOOSE—Bruce Cabot, Lewis Stone, James Gleason. Story "Homecoming" by Tom Walsh. Directed by Ben Stollhoff. A story about careless freeing of criminals on parole, in which a young man turns out to be not only a menace to society but a tragic grief to his family. RKO-Radio.
- fj DOWN THE STRETCH—Mickey Rooney, Patricia Ellis. Screenplay by William Jacobs. Directed by William Clements. The story of a boy and a horse, each of them victims of prejudice on account of the bad records of their respective sires, who made good. Simple in plot but invariably interesting. First National.
- f END OF THE TRAIL—Jack Holt, Guinn Williams, Louise Henry. Novel "Outlaws of the Palouse" by Zane Grey. Directed by Erle C. Kenton. The end of the trail for this lively Westerner who went afoul of the law, was surprisingly logical. Virile entertainment. Columbia.
- m "EVERYTHING IS THUNDER"—Constance Bennett, Oscar Homolka, Douglass Montgomery. Novel by Jocelyn Lee Hardy. Directed by Milton Rosner. A story of the Great War, and a Canadian officer's escape from a prison camp with the help of a German girl. Gaumont-British.

m GENERAL DIED AT DAWN, THE—Gary Cooper, Madeleine Carroll, Akim Tamiroff. Screenplay by Clifford Odets. Directed by Lewis Milestone. A thrilling drama of rebellion in China. A young American, with money for arms to combat the war lord of the northern provinces, is trapped by an American girl whose father is the general's agent. The photography is excellent and the acting of Akim Tamiroff as General Yang and Gary Cooper as the American is likewise excellent. Paramount. See Exceptional Photoplays Department, page 8.

m \*GIVE ME YOUR HEART—Kay Francis, George Brent, Roland Young. Play by Jay Mallory. Directed by Archie Mayo. The story of a wife with a secret that preys so much on her that her marriage is threatened with wreckage. A difficult subject handled with admirable delicacy. Roland Young and Helen Flint supply an enjoyable contrast to the prevailing tone with delightful comedy. Warner.

f MURDER WITH PICTURES—Lew Ayres, Gail Patrick. Story by George Hammon Cox. Directed by Charles Barton. A very involved murder mystery with comedy supplied by the newspapermen who are also suspects. Paramount.

fj OLD HUTCH—Wallace Beery, Elizabeth Patterson, Eric Linden, Cecilia Parker. Story by Garrett Smith. Directed by J. Walter Rubin. The odd effect, amusing and beneficial, which the finding of a lot of money which he couldn't spend, had on the town loafer. A lively and interesting picture of the homey kind. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f RAMONA—Loretta Young, Don Ameche, Kent Taylor. Novel by Helen Hunt Jackson. Directed by Henry King. A re-filming of the famous old story of early California injustice to the Indians, done in Technicolor. Some of the outdoor scenes are superb, among the best color sequences that have yet appeared. 20th Century-Fox.

fj SEA SPOILERS—John Wayne. Screenplay by McGowan and McGowan. Directed by Frank Strayer. The Coast Guard in pursuit of seal poachers. A good adventure story with many excellent twists and situations, and of course exciting, in the "Treasure" tradition. Universal.

f STAGE STRUCK—Dick Powell, Jeanne Madden, Joan Blondell. Screenplay by Robert Lord. Directed by Busby Berkeley. Story of a stage struck girl who wants to get into the chorus. Some amusing spots in the picture and good music. First National.

f THEY MET IN A TAXI—Chester Morris, Fay Wray. Story by Octavus Roy Cohen. Directed by Alfred E. Green. A comedy  
(Continued on page 15)



# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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## Do You Know the Answers?

IS there a Motion Picture Council in your community? What is its purpose and program? Does it publish a Photoplay Guide? Is there a large representation of community organizations on the Council? Are the meetings well conducted? What Committees carry on the activity? If these questions and others of the like are not at all, or only partially answered in your community and you have need of information on the How, Why and What of Motion Picture Councils, it can be secured through the new series of "briefs" recently prepared by the National Motion Picture Council of the National Board of Review.

Many fine new pictures of a high entertainment and cultural value are forthcoming to make the activities program of a Council more important than ever. Older Councils will be able to resume their programs with a renewed purpose and new Councils will find it quite worth while to undertake a program at this time.

Following this series on organization and program activity will come a later one on study and appreciation.

These briefs are available free to National Council membership-subscribers, or are for sale individually to others at 5c or 10c each. May we suggest you write for the announcement to see what you might need in the series. We will be pleased to send it and to give you all help possible in your program.

## The Movies Youth Movement

NOW that summer vacation is just a memory the boys and girls of the National Board of Review's two junior organizations, the Young Reviewers and the 4-Star Clubs, are making plans and anticipating a "bigger and better" year during 1936-37. Among these plans are: a monthly bulletin to be called the 4-STAR FINAL which will contain news from the clubs throughout the country, short digests of the best pictures of the month, suggested club projects and contests, and interesting "fan" news; an arrangement for the showing under club sponsorship of foreign language films in co-operation with the language departments of the schools, of unusual films not generally shown in commercial theatres; a national "make your own movie" contest for both clubs who have entered the production field before and those who are novices.

It is not necessary for a 4-Star Club to be organized as such—any club that has a motion picture interest is eligible for affiliation, and naturally it is not necessary to make any changes in name, constitution, etc.—the motion picture interest being the sole requisite. The annual fee is \$2.00 a year for a club—this fee covers the monthly bulletin, which is sent to the director, sponsor or any other one designated person, and membership pins and cards for each member. The National Board will be glad to receive inquiries regarding the Young Reviewers and the 4-Star Clubs.

# Poetry in the Movies

By ELIHU WINER

*Mr. Winer's interest in the artistic and aesthetic possibilities of the cinema originated during his student days at Vanderbilt and Yale Universities. His active interest has resulted in a number of articles on the motion picture and in the direction of many showings of unusual films in a New York City cultural center.*

ONE of the more publicized phenomena of the summer season in New York was a so-called Congress of American Poets, a congress with sessions every week-end for several months. It was at one of the sessions that Dr. Robert MacDonald, president of the Robert Burns Circle of New York, urged the poets of America to turn toward Hollywood for spiritual, and presumably, physical sustenance.

"I live for the day when I will see poetry in pictures," said Dr. MacDonald. "Poetry will give a new form, a new content, a new expression to the cinema." Calling attention to T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* as an indication of a revival of the poetic drama on the stage and screen, Dr. MacDonald also suggested that the introduction of the poet's philosophy might have a salutary effect on college and high school students. "We're living in the day of the necker," he said. "Were the screen poetic, it could teach these young men and women the real nobility and sweetness and beauty of love."

Production schedules emanating from Hollywood give at least a little support to Dr. MacDonald's position. For instance, a rather well-known poet named Shakespeare seems to be figuring heavily in these schedules, with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet* already released, *Othello* being planned by Samuel Goldwyn, and more *Hamlets* forecast than you can shake a ghost at. If *Romeo and Juliet* doesn't teach "the real nobility and sweetness and beauty of love," then the case seems pretty hopeless.

Even more convincing evidence of the increasing movie importance of the poet is the news that Maxwell Anderson's *Winter-set*, a brave effort to write a modern drama

in poetic terms, is about to reach the nation's screens. The fact that the work of a modern poet such as Anderson is considered suitable screen material indicates another step toward maturity on the part of the movie industry, particularly in the light of reports that *Winter-set* will be filmed largely as written, without being stripped of the poetry, its chief claim to distinction, as was the case with Anderson's other play, *Mary of Scotland*.

Still, the works of Shakespeare and Maxwell Anderson were written for the stage, and of necessity require adaptation for the movies. Even with the most careful adaptation they can be little more than elaborately photographed plays, and the poetry of motion, which is the cinema's chief claim to artistic merit, must elude them. It is very easy to confuse the poetry of dialogue with the poetry of motion in thinking of the movies. Actually, the loftiest language and the loftiest thought when recorded unimagined by camera and sound track pale into insignificance when compared with such a commonplace event as the break of dawn over Odessa when filmed by an Eisenstein.

Poetry is defined as "the form of literature that embodies beautiful thought, feeling, or action, in rhythmical and (usually) metrical language." In a wider sense, the dictionary continues, "poetry may be anything that pleasingly addresses the imagination; as the poetry of motion." Rouben Mamoulian, who ought to know about such things, has called the motion picture "a dynamic and rhythmic arrangement of moving forms to tell a story." With properly imaginative conception, photography, and editing, a motion picture may very easily fulfill the basic requirements of poetry without so much as a single word of dialogue.

Strangely enough, what there has been of poetry in films has been accomplished not by poets, but by ex-chemical engineers, ex-mathematicians, ex-vaudeville artists, and others hardly given to producing quatrains.



Chaplin, Pudovkin, Eisenstein, Clair, Lubitsch, and others have produced, each in his own way, forms of poetry with strips of celluloid; poetry pleasing or terrifying, heavily dramatic or lightly satirical, yet undeniably poetry according to any fair interpretation of the word. Some directors have consciously sought to create cine-poems, as Joris Ivens, the young Dutch director, did with his *Rain*. Others have created highly poetical sequences in the larger business of telling graphic film stories.

If the poets are to be of any value to the cinema, they must first learn the technique of the motion picture. They must learn, for instance, that strikingly poetic effects may be gained by the simple splicing of one length of film to another, although each length by itself may be utterly prosaic. They must learn that the most technical of scenarios, full of such unpoetic phrases as dolly-ing and zoom-shots, may produce the simplest and most beautiful films. They must learn that writing for the screen requires a type of imagination far different from anything they have known before; an imagination to be expressed in filmic images rather than in beautiful words. They must learn not to be afraid of the word montage, about which there is so much confusion, but which means simply the editing of various strips of film to gain a desired effect, poetic or otherwise. Most of all, they must learn that writing for the screen can be a satisfying experience in itself, instead of being merely an easy way to earn some extra money.

When they have learned these things, when they have learned, as Dr. MacDonald has said, striking perhaps unwittingly at the heart of the problem, to "see poetry in pictures," the poets may indeed be ready to take up the writing of screen scenarios. They will not give a new form, a new content, a new expression to the cinema, for the engineers, the mathematicians, and the vaudeville artists have beaten them to it. But they may add a certain sensitiveness to a medium which can stand it. And—who knows?—they may even teach young men and women "the real nobility and sweetness and beauty of love."

## Irving Thalberg

THE death of Irving Thalberg is a loss to motion pictures which the public will feel much more than it will be aware of. Producers get little of the kind of publicity that connects their names with successful films in the memory of the mass of movie-goers, and Thalberg, though the industry has known him for years for the important figure that he was, was more reticent than most about putting his name in big letters. The motion picture must have been a passion with him for him to have given himself so completely to it—so completely that he undoubtedly shortened his life by overwork. Along with that passion went a keen perception of popular taste and a shrewd eye for talent, either in actors or directors or writers, to meet that taste. Like any successful business executive in the movie industry he had to look for wide popular approval, but any reference to a list of the pictures he made will show that he was always in the lead—if his films were often bigger, they were just as often better. He helped enormously to raise box-office standards—and it was a personal help, because his supervision of production was intensely active and not merely nominal. From his productions the public learned to expect and demand better things on the screen, and as he grew he provided better things.

He was not one of the great originators, exploring new fields in the cinematic art or seeking particularly to show how the screen may be something powerful in its own right, independent of the stage and the novel in its material. But that he might have come to—he had already brought standards of production about as far as he could. With *Romeo and Juliet* as the indication of his aims, and as the measure of his final achievement, to have died so young is an untimely end to a career that still was rich in promise.



# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLOTS DEPARTMENT

*This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of Exceptional and Honorable*

*Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.*

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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## Romeo and Juliet

*Screenplay by Talbot Jennings from William Shakespeare's tragedy; directed by George Cukor; photographed by William Daniels; musical director, Herbert Stothart; art directors, Cedric Gibbons and Oliver Messel; costume designer, Gilbert Adrian. Produced by Irving Thalberg; distributed by Metro Goldwyn Mayer.*

### The cast

Juliet .....	Norma Shearer
Romeo .....	Leslie Howard
Mercutio .....	John Barrymore
Nurse .....	Edna May Oliver
Tybalt .....	Basil Rathbone
Capulet .....	C. Aubrey Smith
Lady Capulet .....	Violet Kemble-Cooper
Paris .....	Ralph Forbes
Peter .....	Andy Devine
Montague .....	Robert Warwick
Lady Montague .....	Virginia Hammond
Benvolio .....	Reginald Denny
Balthasar .....	Maurice Murphy
Friar Lawrence .....	Henry Kolker
Prince of Verona .....	Conway Tearle
Rosaline .....	Katherine DeMille

LOVERS of Shakespeare, hopeful and fearful at the same time about the translation of the bard to the screen, will be amazed and joyful at this production—at what it does and at what it refrains from doing. For the screen has challenged the stage where many people have believed the stage unchallengeable—in the classic poetic drama—and in beauty, dignity, and most surprising of all, in artistic judgment and taste, created something that the stage can only dream of.

Of course there are old timers who will remember a Mercutio they liked better, or a Juliet, or Romeo, or Nurse; but the fondest recollector will find nothing in his memory to compare with the whole production. For the whole production is really the star,

and individual actors count, though they count heavily, only as parts of the whole. How often have we gone to the theatre to see this play only because some favorite actress had finally come to the point in her career where she could try her prowess in a part that apparently all ambitious actresses must have a whirl at before they die; gone hopefully, and come away lucky if there were a few moments when the magic of Shakespeare had been allowed to shine through. Always the play moved along jerkily, because of cuts and the stage necessities in changing scenes, and always there was deadness in the background and minor parts. A "great" performance was one in which two or three actors caught and expressed some of the poetic glory of their parts, and made us forget the commonplaceness of the rest. We never expected anything more.

*Romeo and Juliet*, on the screen, makes us realize what we have missed. Here is Renaissance Italy for background, teeming with live detail. The enmity of the Capulets and Montagues was a vital matter in the life of Verona, something seething hotly under the surface always in danger of breaking out and involving the whole city in fighting and bloodshed. The screenplay makes that vividly obvious from the beginning, and so creates a solid inevitability for the tragedy of Romeo and Juliet's love. Accident had its share in the way it worked out, but the seeds of tragedy were there. Of course all this is in Shakespeare, but few stage productions make it more than barely evident, any more than they give any sense of the times and kind of people among whom such a tragedy was natural.



The chief point, and the chief glory, of the film is that it lets the essentials of Shakespeare come through, in a rich flow of action, turbulent with a life that is more than the doings of the star players, and shimmering with poetry. Very seldom, as so often on the stage, do certain speeches seem "set," standing out from their scenes as a stunt for the actor to put over. For the most part it moves, and the speech is part of the movement.

After the beginning, with its opulent recreation of Verona and the simmering hatred between two of its leading families, there is something slow and heavy in the starting of the love story, with the pageantry of the Capulet ball and the kidding of Romeo about his love for Rosaline. Shakespearean kidding is pretty hard to take nowadays, a lot of verbosity that calls for more careful acquaintance with the dictionary than it is worth. But after Romeo has arrived at the ball things sail along with a fine movement, barring one more flight of antic fancy from Mercutio, mountingly to the end.

Everybody helps. The scene designers, the costumers, the music, the crowds, the actors. And a director who has the whole thing well in hand, with a cultured, sympathetic knowledge of what he is doing. Those who stand out, stand out because what they have to do is more evident. Norma Shearer perhaps above everyone else, because Juliet is *the* part, and she is content to let Juliet play her, so to speak, instead of using the part to make a show of. She has the beauty and the voice, and through them she lets Shakespeare's most tragically lovely heroine come to life without histrionics and without straining for effect. Whatever actresses in the past have done with this part, rising to what are called greater heights in certain scenes, surely no one can have made it more completely lovely as a whole. Leslie Howard has the virtue of making Romeo seem less silly than he really is in the beginning, and of making the one-dimensional business of being a young man in love seem important and solid. Basil Rathbone has everything the fiery Tybalt needs—and that is a lot, because Tybalt is one of the pivotal parts in the play. John Barrymore has a next-to-impossible job in Mercutio, because most of

Mercutio's talk is a kind of fanciful delight in words that seems pretty far-fetched and unnatural to today's taste. But Mercutio was a man of action as well as of words, and though scenes like the "Queen Mab" speech depend on how much one cares for Barrymore when he is being antic, when he challenges Tybalt to the fatal duel is one of the tingling moments in the picture.

Everybody else fits in so effectively that the whole play, certainly for the first time within memory, becomes something more than a mere starring vehicle: it becomes the play that Shakespeare wrote, with a continuity of movement he must have desired but never could achieve. The adaptation to the screen adds no lines that Shakespeare did not write, though it cuts—as every stage production does—many lines that are repetitious or unnecessary when the eye has been told their import. Scenes have been added, of course, but always scenes that Shakespeare implied, and surely would have written if his stage could have held them. Even added songs come from other plays of his instead of being "specially composed." It is an adaptation reverent enough to satisfy the most demanding taste, but never solemn and pedantic.

If the movie-going masses are ready for bardolatry, this film will discover it. The Shakespeare-on-the-screen question is no longer up to the producers—it's up to the public. (Rated *exceptional*)—J. S. H.

## The Devil Is a Sissy

Story by Rowland Brown; screenplay by John Lee Mahin and Richard Schayer; directed by W. S. Van Dyke; photographed by Harold Rosson and George Schneidermann; produced by Frank Davis; distributed by Metro Goldwyn Mayer.

### The cast

Claude .....	Freddie Bartholomew
"Buck" Murphy .....	Jackie Cooper
"Gig" Stevens .....	Mickey Rooney
Jay Pierce .....	Ian Hunter
Rose .....	Peggy Conklin
Hilda Pierce .....	Katharine Alexander
Mr. Murphy .....	Gene Lockhart
Mrs. Murphy .....	Kathleen Lockhart
Judge Holmes .....	Jonathan Hale

**C**HILDREN on the screen have an immense popular appeal, largely of an entirely uncritical kind. If they are cute and amusing, or sweet and touching, it

doesn't seem to matter what kind of trash is thrown together in the way of a story for them. They are usually remarkably good troupers, and not nearly so objectionable to the fastidious as they are made to appear by the preposterous things the writers devise for them to appear in.

The fact probably is that good, true kid stories are the hardest kind to write. There must be a plot, and hokum is the easiest thing to use and the most difficult to avoid in contriving a plot about youngsters. *The Devil is a Sissy* has its share of hokum, demanded, evidently, by the traditional necessity of providing punch and emotional climax to a story that in its essentials may have seemed too simple. Fortunately the plot is far less important than the characters, and the picture abounds in characters written and acted with refreshing humaneness.

The main argument of the story—and it does argue a bit obviously—is a highly moral one, to the effect that being straight and honest is a tough job, and that it is the weaklings, “sissies,” who go wrong. But enlivening this homily are three very human boys, up to entirely boyish business. One is English, with divorced parents, living for an allotted six months with his father in a city neighborhood where the public school brings him among some young toughies who are an entirely new and fascinating breed to him. The two whom he is most ambitious to be pals with have no use for him at all—one is the son of a gangster who has just been electrocuted, and the dead gangster is a hero to the pair of them. The main thread of plot grows out of schemes to buy a tombstone for him. English Claude gets himself into the young gang through sheer persistence, and engineers a robbery that turns out not to be a robbery, though it lands them all in the juvenile court. What happens after that is not so plausible, though it is thoroughly interesting.

Freddie Bartholomew, Jackie Cooper and Mickey Rooney are remarkably good, being human and natural. Freddie is rather painfully “cheerio” at times, but that is part of what it's all about. But they are all astonishingly lacking in cuteness and other fic-

tional characteristics of screen children. More like something Mark Twain would have written if he'd had New York streets for his setting. The other people—the understanding father of Claude and his snobbish mother, the blustering 100-percent legionnaire father of Buck, the judge, the grown-up gangsters who provide a bit of excitement toward the end, and a French cook in a roadside diner who insisted that Italian spaghetti was French noodles—create a believable background against which the boys seem really to get somewhere.

Altogether it is one of the best kid pictures that has been made, and Rowland Brown is obviously responsible for a striking part of its excellence.—J. S. H.

(Rated *honorable mention*.)

## Odets in Hollywood

FOR metropolitan theatre-goers the important thing—in advance—about *The General Died at Dawn* was that Clifford Odets was writing the screenplay. For the rest of the movie-going public the main news about it is that it is a good show, with some exciting action, picturesque characters and the kind of direction that Lewis Milestone always makes seem something more than just competent. It is a melodrama about a Chinese war-lord, and an American trying to keep him from getting guns and ammunition to pursue his villainous career with. It could be recommended and dismissed for just what it is—good entertainment—if it were not for the hopes one continues to indulge in when new talent is known to have gone to Hollywood. Mr. Odets is undoubtedly talented, with an individual vigor of his own, but here he has done no more than many scenario writers, given his chance, could have done. And few of them, being good enough to have been assigned this present job, would have been guilty of some of the high-falutin' speeches he occasionally breaks out with. But the most serious fault to be found with him is that he apparently devoted himself to trimmings instead of tackling the harder business—and the far more important busi-



ness—of giving his plot a better framework and bringing it to a more plausible and impressive conclusion. He must have had a free hand—a story, frankly romantic, about Chinese banditry does not need the dynamite that producers are timid about—but he used it so lazily that his trip to Hollywood appears to have profited nobody but himself. Certainly the movies have gained nothing important, which is a pity.—J. S. H.

## The Motion Picture as Curriculum

UNIVERSITY courses in the motion picture are again receiving attention with the fall openings. The increasing interest and enrollment in these courses indicates the growing recognition of the motion picture as a cultural and educational medium. It is studied because of its importance in the life of today and because it is offering constantly an enlarged field of activity for the trained.

Several courses in New York City universities are being resumed this fall. There is the inclusive course at New York University under the joint auspices of the School of Education and the National Board of Review. Given by distinguished lecturers it covers the motion picture in its artistic, technical, educational and social phases. This course is especially useful to the teacher, to the social worker, and to the layman working in community motion picture programs, because it discusses practical problems of schools, social agencies, and community organizations in relation to films both of the entertainment and educational types. The first term will be devoted largely to the evolution of the motion picture and its technical and artistic problems. The second term will deal more largely with the educational and social aspects of the movies. Opportunities open to members of the class include learning how to organize and conduct photoplay clubs, visiting motion picture studios to see how pictures are made, observing the Young Reviewers in action as they rate a picture, attending special motion picture conferences, learning to judge, rate,

and review motion pictures, seeing and hearing interesting motion picture personalities, sitting with a Review Committee of the National Board of Review.

It is under the direction of Dr. Frederic M. Thrasher, Associate Professor of the School of Education and a member of the Executive Committee of the National Board of Review. This is an evening course given once a week on Thursdays at 8:15 in the Washington Square branch of the University.

Columbia University in its courses in The Art of the Theatre offers a course on Scenario Writing and Production. The course will follow the workshop plan, allowing for individual writing projects. There will be lectures, conferences and seminars, some of which will be conducted by representatives of the industry. Exercises will be assigned in the writing of story treatments, continuity, screen dialogue, plot building, character delineation, the dramatization of setting and comedy methods. Attention will be given to the technical procedure through which a story passes in the process of being filmed. A library of professional scripts and stills has been assembled for the use of the class. It is given by Mrs. Frances Taylor Patterson and Mr. Rowland Patterson. Mrs. Patterson is a member of the Exceptional Photoplays Committee of the National Board of Review and the author of two books on the motion picture: "Cinema Craftsmanship" and "Scenario and Screen." The hours for this course are also evening, Mondays at 7:30.

A short course on the Photoplay and the Schools will be given at Teachers College, Columbia University, on Thursday afternoons, October 22 - November 19 by Professor Allan Abbott and Mrs. Mary Allen Abbott and specialists. The meetings are from 4:10 to 6:00 o'clock, with a speaker the first hour and discussion or the showing of a motion picture the second hour.

Sidney Kingsley, Sidney Howard and Clifford Odets, playwrights, will give lectures in a course on screen treatment to be offered this term by the New York University Division of General Education.

(Continued on page 15)

# If I Were Doing It

**A**MATEUR critics is what we all are as we express to family and friends our opinions, approving or disapproving, of pictures and picture presentation. If we are interested in learning how much we agree in our judgments with the professional critics there is a way of finding out, for Film Daily, a leading motion picture trade paper, conducts an annual Critics Forum, with more than 400 of the countries leading film critics and editors taking part, and the results of the 1936 forum have recently been summarized.

Each of the critics was asked to express himself on "If I Were a Producer," "If I Were an Exhibitor" and "If I Were a Publicity Man," with a "Squawk Department" also provided for any general complaints.

Here in order of most frequent mention are the answers under three of the above headings. This listing furnishes a means of checking your own "pet" feelings to see how they accord with those of the critics and also if this is done as a group interest the results will then not only show the various individual comparisons but will show whether the critics speak as the public thinks.

## POINTERS FOR PRODUCERS

- Give more attention to stories.
- Make fewer changes in classics, books, plays and history adapted to the screen.
- Produce more biographical and historical pictures.
- Eliminate "stock company" casts.
- Avoid imitation and cycles.
- Limit quantity of output in favor of quality.
- Present more new talent.
- Make more down-to-earth, human stories on social themes.
- Do not "hoke" stories to conform to Hollywood ideas.
- Permit actors to express themselves naturally instead of gilding them with glamour and making artificial fashion plates out of them.
- Give sure-fire character actors and old timers a better chance.

Don't make settings so ornate, and see that characters are dressed in a style that conforms with the level of affluence or poverty they are supposed to represent.

Make more pictures in color.

Present more "homey" type players like Marie Dressler, Will Rogers, etc.

Don't permit censors to impose too many restrictions on story themes.

Remake more of the silent hits.

Use fewer child actors unless specifically called for by story.

Improve quality of comedy in short subjects.

Make more pictures for children.

Produce a certain number of experimental films each year.

Hold regular producer exhibitor conferences.

Avoid typing actors.

Produce more non-fiction shorts.

## EXHIBITOR SUGGESTIONS

Drop double features.

Drop premiums and all forms of giveaways.

Contact patrons regularly to get their views on attractions and other matters.

Put special selling campaigns behind artistic films of merit that are commercially doubtful.

Advertise in newspapers, or post in lobby, starting time of feature.

Give programs better balance, particularly including a certain amount of comedy on each bill.

Employ less extravagant and more truthful advertising.

Pay strictest attention to seating comfort and ventilation.

Advertise short subjects.

Institute "cordial" in preference to insincere "stiff-necked" service.

Effect community tieups.

Oppose block booking.

Don't use same type of ballyhoo for each film, but make exploitation fit the subject.

Limit shows to two or two and a half hours.



Provide patrons with printed programs.  
Sell the actual merits of each picture instead of employing snappy feminine figures for every attraction.

#### GENERAL SQUAWKS

Too much drinking and smoking in pictures.  
Too many boners in free treatment of history.  
Numerous theaters run too much screen advertising and trailers.  
Not enough pictures dealing with vital social topics.  
Too much fuss made over one-hit writers and actors who are signed to long-term contracts and then promoted by publicity.  
Too much editorializing in newsreels.  
Too many illogical endings in pictures, the "happy ever after" finish being forced when not necessary.  
Not enough credit given to writers for their part in the success of pictures.  
Insufficient identification of casts.  
Screen advertising.  
Miscasting.  
Senseless censorship.  
Changing titles of popular works.  
Bank Nights and similar stunts.  
Dual bills.  
Watch important details, to avoid "boner" accusations.

Perhaps after those things we would like to see corrected or changed by producer or exhibitor are off our chest and on paper, it might be of interest to consider the changes "If I Were a Critic."

## Movies and Books Make Us Pleasantly Busy

**S**UMMER'S active sports no longer fill our leisure hours but there is still plenty of recreation and pleasant pastime for us in movies and books, which provide year-around entertainment. More and more it is possible to think of motion pic-



## Books To Grow On

tures and books together, for so many fine books—classics and moderns—are being adapted to the screen. Specifically when we think of films and books at this season, we think of Book Week, which is sponsored annually by the National Association of Book Publishers.

This year it comes on the dates of November 15th to 21st, with the theme "Books to Grow on—The Modern World for Young Readers." And since the young readers of the modern world are so movie-minded, they will want to read the books they have seen in the movies and they will want to see in the movies the books they like to read.

As has been its custom for 14 years, the National Board of Review will compile a list of the selected book-film adaptations of the past year for use in connection with Book Week. This year in addition to the listing there will be a summary of the results of a questionnaire conducted among the Young Reviewers of the National Board of Review on the subject "What Books I Would Like to See Filmed."

This can be secured either through the National Association of Book Publishers, 347 Fifth Avenue, New York City, or this office, in time for Book Week use at the cost of 10 cents.

## Book Reviews

### Romeo and Juliet

ONE of the most practically useful books for students of the motion picture that has yet appeared, because, containing both Shakespeare's text and the complete screenplay made from it by Talbot Jennings, it supplies an excellent example of adaptation to the screen's technique, with sufficient explanation of why and for what purpose departures from the stage version were made. In addition there are essays by almost everyone who had an important part in the creation of the motion picture.

*Published by Random House, N. Y. C., \$2.00.*

### Movie Parade

A FASCINATING picture-book covering very capably the development of the motion picture, with stills from all the most notable pictures, American and European, that have been made, divided into convenient categories of the different types of movies. Collected and compiled by Paul Rotha, film critic and film historian.

*Published by The Studio Publications, Inc., N. Y. C., \$3.50.*

### Library Interest

LIBRARIANS are giving more and more attention to motion pictures. Ways in which this attention is shown are through the collection of historical material telling of the beginning and the development of the motion picture, the acquisition of more books on the motion picture, the preparation of book-marks listing related reading, and the assembling of exhibits which are arranged to give the public and the student a graphic story of the medium and its uses.

The New York Public Library has a notable Theatre Collection and its files are especially rich in cinema material consisting of books, bound press books, stills, scrap-books of mounted newspaper reviews, early and current periodicals, scenarios and sound scripts. Included also in the Picture Collection is a large number of posters illustrating the theatre activity. This collection has been

exhibited in the Main Library of the New York Public Library to a large and interested audience and many of its materials are in continuous loan circulation.

The Cleveland Public Library has shown notable interest in this subject for many years. It started in the fall of 1935 a monthly publication devoted to library-film cooperation called "Books and Films" in which principles are discussed, suggestions furnished about coming pictures and practical hints given dictated by experience.

A recent issue of this publication presents a plea to which many will want to add their approval. It says, "Cinema clubs, motion picture committees, parent-teacher associations—all those working for better films are urged to ask producing companies to make stills for shorts. So many of these shorts are the finest kind of material for the cooperation of libraries and schools but stills are needed. Stills are the keynote of library and school displays. Write to producers, asking that they make stills for all educational shorts, also that they book these, whenever possible, in series. In the case of such a series it would be in order for libraries to include in their displays a list of the titles and the dates on which these were to be shown, also the name of the theatre. . . . Why does not some enterprising producer prepare and show, in a small theatre in the downtown districts of large cities, a number of short subjects that, taken together, would make up a course in adult education? Each program could run for a week and the entire series be cumulative. It is certain many people would welcome such a course and would attend regularly week after week. Libraries and all educational organizations would be delighted to cooperate with such an undertaking."

Here is a suggestion to think about and more than that to do something about.

One of our Cleveland Cinema Club correspondents writes the following item of interest, "Three sample bulletin boards showing library-film cooperation were sent from Cleveland to the American Library Association's annual meeting and then become the property of the American Library Association to be circulated as requests may be made."



# Junior Judgments

THE Young Reviewers have had quite a varied diet of cinema fare during the summer months. The group's opinion of *Rhythm on the Range* can best be summarized by a 13 year old girl, "Bing Crosby is a singing cowpuncher that comes to New York for the rodeo and thinks more of 'Cuddles' his bull than he does of women. Bob Burns and his bazooka furnish the greatest amount of fun. He's one radio star that doesn't disappoint you in the flesh. The other comedian, Martha Ray was pretty silly, if she was supposed to be comical she missed—she was just fantastic. I don't think anyone would mind being 'roped in' on this picture though." *Kelly the Second* is not "a have to see picture" according to a 15 year old boy, "but its two well known comedians supply enough entertainment to make it worth seeing if you happen to have a little time to spare and want to laugh. Everyone, old and young, should find some amusement from the efforts of Patsy Kelly and Charley Chase to lead a hard-hitting Irishman to the heavyweight championship of the world." *Devil Doll* was considered by 7 of the 10 members present at the meeting, to be the best picture of its type they had ever seen because it was "fantastic but not hideous as horror films usually are." They all agreed with a 13 year-old girl that "the photography was excellent. I have never seen anything like it—it was marvelous. That alone made the picture very worth while but it is very entertaining too." In discussing the acting a boy of 14 remarked, "I thought Lionel Barrymore was better than I ever saw him. I was late and came in when he was disguised as the old woman and I didn't even recognize him and that's something! Lionel Barrymore is usually Lionel Barrymore and no else." "I think the novelty of this picture is that we've never seen anything like it before. The little people and little animals were so attractive there was no feeling of repulsion," this opinion of a 13 year-old boy was agreed with by all but a girl of 14 who thought it

"was all too silly. But I'm not a fair judge because I always dodge these kind of pictures." It was agreed that the picture would prove entertaining for all—as a novelty for the grown-ups and the children would be interested in the toy element and would not be bothered by the gruesome idea in the scientist's mind—changing all humans and animals to 1/6 their normal size.

*Anthony Adverse* and *The Green Pastures* furnished the longest and most interested discussions. Regarding *Green Pastures* a girl of 15 said, "This film was certainly not like any film I've ever seen. You go see an ordinary film and it has so much murder, gangsters and love in it that you come out with unpleasant emotions but this picture leaves you feeling fine and good. I wouldn't say that I was religious but this picture makes the Lord so beautiful and understanding. I think everyone should see it and some of those will get a lot out of it—those that can understand this conception of God. It's childlike but beautiful and understandable." A girl of 13, "I always thought the Bible stories were serious and besides making them modern this made them comical too." A boy of 16 answered this with, "I don't think it was comical at all. It was a real picture if I ever saw one. As I see it the Southern negro isn't well read, traveled or educated. A person can't imagine much he's never seen or read or heard about so they imagine heaven in the terms they are used to. Everything was as perfect as they would wish the earth to be—singing (they like to sing according to the songs we hear), fish fries, big 'seegars'—everything they would like to have and do on earth would make heaven for them. And that's what a lot of people's idea of heaven is. But one thing rebelled me. I am a Protestant and one of the Ten Commandments is that you cannot make any image of God. Before I saw this picture I knew that the Lord was in it but I imagined they would just show a mist or something like that." Boy of 16, "I can't imagine anyone taking the chance of making a pic-

ture like this. No one of course knows what heaven or the Lord looks like." A girl of 15, "I feel this way about it—when Moses and Aaron went to Pharoah they said 'Free us Hebrews'—they even imagined us Jewish people as being colored. Everyone in their world was colored so that's why they thought of De Lawd and angels as colored. The way they talked pleased me—just like they do every day. The whole picture was perfect. As far as the modern angle goes—the preacher was telling this 'fable', as it was called, to little children and he had to describe it in words they would understand. They couldn't have comprehended clothes and ways of living in biblical times but they could understand a story told in words they were used to and know." Girl (15), "I think the things the Lord said were so beautifully said that we can overlook those so-called modern and comic touches. They didn't bother me because I was so impressed with the goodness and tenderness of the film." Girl (14), "I will never forget the way De Lawd's face shone when he was talking about mercy in the end of the picture." Boy (16), "The direction of this film was much above the average. It needed much abandonment and freedom of fear of criticism to make it such a success. I can't see where any half-way broadminded person would find any objection to it."

Of the 41 present at the showing of *Anthony Adverse*, 2 had read the book and 17 were going to read it after seeing the picture which the majority considered *not long enough*. The happy ending seemed to be rather on the up-grade after having been condemned for the past several years. 14 would have liked a happy ending for *Anthony* a boy of 15 adding, "The ending was trite—sad endings are getting as trite as happy ones used to be. I'd like to see 'em happy for a change. All these super-colossal pictures lately have these very sad endings with the hero gazing off into the heavens, like in *Tale of Two Cities*, *Anna Karenina*, etc. A boy of 16 answered with, "You couldn't have a happy ending here—this was a kind of unhappy happiness." Those on the opposite side agreed with a boy of 14 who said, "I liked this ending a lot. It gives

you something to think about after you leave and go home. You can imagine all kinds of things that happened to Anthony in America." A boy of 16 was of the opinion that the picture must have been rather difficult to produce because, "The book and likewise the picture portrays a man's life and it's hard for a movie to show what goes on in a man's mind. It's easy for the author to write down what a person is thinking but the screen has to rely so much on acting. It's hard on the actor too. That was the one thing I thought was wrong with the picture—it was hard to tell from the acting when Anthony was depressed and why." The majority thought Mr. March was at his best though 10 thought he had been better in other pictures. One of the boys would have liked to have seen Claude Rains play Napoleon as well as Don Luis because the "guy who played Napoleon was terrible." A girl of 13 had a Napoleonic idea too—she was of the opinion that it would have been better to have done it as in *Becky Sharp*—just show Napoleon's profile. She also thought that the Josephine in this film was "too Mae Westish." Another young lady of 13 wanted to know why Napoleon didn't have his hand in his vest and a boy of 12 explained to her that it was because "his coat was buttoned over the wrong way." Do they miss anything?

*Anthony Adverse* was rated as an exceptional picture and for the adult audience of 15 years up because it was "too deep for younger children." A boy of 15 said, "The part in Africa is very important to understand the character of Anthony—the fight within himself—with his conscience. I don't think younger children would understand how this interlude effected his life afterwards." A little girl of 11 agreed with him, "There are lots of points children would not see and they would have to have a council with the big people and that would spoil it."—P. H.





(Continued from page 2)

about a taxi-driver and a runaway bride, with jewel robbery complications. Talky, but the talk is fairly amusing. Columbia.

- f **THREE MARRIED MEN**—Roscoe Karnes, Lynne Overman, William Frawley, Mary Brian. Story by Owen Davis, Sr. Directed by Edward Buzzell. An amusing sophisticated comedy of newly-weds who have in-law trouble. Paramount.

- fj **TRAILIN' WEST**—Dick Foran, Paula Stone. Screenplay by Anthony Caldeaway. Directed by Noel Smith. A War between the States melodrama, of a Pinkerton operator sent West to dissolve a gang of guerrillas who are pretending to be Southerners. A good old-time Western. First National.

- f **TWO IN A CROWD**—Joan Bennett, Joel McCrea. Screenplay by Lewis R. Foster. Directed by Alfred E. Green. An impoverished racehorse owner and a jobless girl pick up the two halves of a thousand dollar bill and throw in their lot together. The plot is a bit complicated which makes the story drag at times, but there are plenty of amusing situations and a light comedy touch is retained throughout. Universal.

- f **WIVES NEVER KNOW**—Mary Boland, Charles Ruggles. Story by Keene Thompson. Directed by Elliott Nugent. A light and amusing comedy done in the Boland-Ruggles sophisticated style. Trouble starts in the home when a visiting author gives advice. Paramount.

## SHORT SUBJECTS

### INFORMATIONALS

- f **BEHIND THE HEADLINES**—Vivid account of how a news story gets to the public. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f **CLOTHES THAT MEN LIKE**—Fall fashion show done with more ingenuity and general interest than such things usually are. March of Fashion.
- f **DISPUTED DECISIONS**—Instances of close victories in many sports. Columbia.
- f **FOOTBALL FLASHES**—Practice glimpses, and crucial moments in former games. Columbia.
- f **GOING PLACES NO. 27**—Tuna fishing in Sicily; Oregon's Crater Lake; etc. Universal.
- fj **\*LOGGING ALONG**—Work of lumberjacks with an appropriate commentator. Vitaphone.
- f **LOVERS' PARADISE**—Scenic in color. Paramount.
- f **\*MARCH OF TIME—ISSUE NO. 1—SERIES NO. 3**—Covering the origin, growth and cessation of the Passamaquoddy project; how pasteurized milk started in this country and spread, to the great improvement of health; and Gerald Smith, the fanatical rabble-rouser who is trying to wear Huey Long's mantle. RKO-Radio.
- f **PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 2**—Making stainless steel; fog frozen on trees in Washington State; Henry Scott at piano. Paramount.
- f **PARDON MY SPRAY**—Marine sports, picturesque and interesting. RKO-Radio.
- fj **\*SERVANT OF THE PEOPLE**—An excellent dramatization of how the Constitution of the United States was made. Suggested for schools and libraries; worth being kept permanently available. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj **SPORTS IN THE ALPS**—Exceptionally lovely photography. Educational.
- f **STRAIGHT AS AN ARROW**—Splendid exhibition of archery. Paramount.
- fj **SWAMPLAND (Struggle to Live Series)**—Wild creatures in Southern swamps. Interesting. RKO-Radio.
- f **\*VITAPHONE PICTORIAL REVIEW NO. 1**—Unusually good—how to learn to: tap dance; ski; and how Oscar

of the Waldorf makes a lamb stew; styles in furs. Vitaphone.

### CARTOONS

- fj **NIGHT LIFE OF THE BUGS**—Clever Oswald cartoon. Universal.
- fj **TRAINING PIGEONS (Betty Boop)**—Pudgy, the pup, goes to retrieve a wayward pigeon, but the pigeon retrieves him. Paramount.

### COMEDIES, MUSICALS, NOVELTIES AND SERIALS

- fj **ACE DRUMMOND (Serial) NOS. 1-3**—John King, Jean Rogers, Lon Chaney, Jr., Noah Beery, Jr. Adapted from Eddie Rickenbacker newspaper strip. Directed by Ford Beebe and Cliff Smith. All attempts to successfully launch an International Airways are being thwarted by mysterious enemies working in Mongolia. Universal.
- f **GOING NATIVE**—Singing and dancing in a Havana cafe. Educational.
- fj **KNOCK KNOCK WHO'S THERE**—Vincent Lopez and orchestra. Paramount.
- f **LALAPALOOSA**—Comedy sketch which contains some good imitations of radio stars. RKO-Radio.
- f **RING GOES 'ROUND, THE**—Henry King's orchestra plays, with a bit of plot to keep the thing together. Educational.
- f **SCREEN SNAPSHOTS NO. 13**—Movie people, mostly in their yachts and sailboats. Columbia.
- f **VITAPHONE GAETIES**—Good sample of vaudeville of a few years ago, particularly the tap dancing and a tramp bicycle act. Vitaphone.

### FOREIGN LANGUAGE PRODUCTIONS

- f **BESOK I EN SMASTAD (A Visit to a Small City)**—Scandinavian Talking Pictures.
- f **ETT APROPA TILL RIKSDAGSJUBILEET (The Riksdag's 500 Year Jubilee)**—Scandinavian Talking Pictures.
- f **PA SOLSIDAN (On the Sunny Side)**—Lars Hanson, Ingrid Bergman. Play by Helge Krog. Directed by Gustaf Molander. A pleasant romantic comedy, about a girl who marries a wealthy man, and how he became sure she didn't do it for his money. Done with the usual excellence of Swedish pictures in direction, acting and photography. There are English subtitles. Scandinavian Talking Pictures.
- f **SANG UNDER SEGEL (Songs and Sails)**—Scandinavian Talking Pictures.

(Continued from page 9)

Teaching with Radio and Motion Pictures will be discussed and demonstrated in a course for classroom teachers on the utilization of radio, phonograph, lantern slides and motion pictures in modern instruction, given under the auspices of the College of the City of New York, School of Education, in the auditorium of the New York Museum of Science and Industry at Rockefeller Center, Wednesday afternoons, 4:00 to 5:50 P.M. through this fall semester. Of the six lecturers in the course, two, Mrs. Grace Fisher Ramsey of the American Museum of Natural History, and Miss Rita Hochheimer, Assistant Director of Visual Instruction of the New York City Board of Education, are members of our National Motion Picture Council, and two others, Dr. V. C. Arnsperger, Director of Research of Erpi Picture Consultants, and Mr. F. Dean McCluskey, Director of the Scarborough School at Scarborough on Hudson, have spoken on National Board Conference programs.

## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures is a citizen body, organized in 1909 by the People's Institute of New York City as a medium for reflecting intelligent public opinion regarding a growing art and entertainment. This is still the Board's function, together with that of disseminating information on the subject of motion pictures and carrying on a constructive program having to do with community cooperation in the advancement and uses of the motion picture.

The National Board is opposed to legal censorship and is in favor of the community better films plan of placing emphasis upon and building support for the finer and more worthwhile films. It is at all times glad to cooperate with any agency to encourage and guide the motion picture in developing its possibilities both as recreation and as entertainment.

It carries on its work through various committees. All members of the committees serve without pay. No member is connected with the motion picture industry. They are representative of varied interests and activities and many are connected with large public welfare organizations or educational institutions.

The General Committee is a body evolved out of the original group organized in 1909. It is the appeal and central advisory committee of the National Board to which policies are referred and to which decisions of the Review Committee regarding pictures may be carried either by the producers or by the Review Committee itself.

The Executive Committee is composed of members of the General Committee and is the directing body of the National Board, charged with the formulation of policies, the election of members, the expenditure of funds and supervision of all administrative affairs.

The Review Committee is a large group of 300 members carrying on the work of reviewing the films. It is divided into sub-groups which meet for review per schedule during each week in the projection rooms of the various motion picture companies.

The Membership Committee supervises the membership list of the Review Committee and recommends the names of proposed new members for consideration by the Executive Committee.

The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays is composed of critics and students of the cinema interested particularly in encouraging the artistic development of the motion picture. It reviews and publishes a critique of the finest films and assists community groups in the showing of unusual films to special audiences. Its pioneer activity has done much to lay the foundation for the Little Photoplay Theatre movement and to stimulate the organization of subscription groups to develop audiences for the support of the creative achievements of the screen.

## NATIONAL MOTION PICTURE COUNCIL

The community or field work of the National Board of Review is conducted under its National Motion Picture Council, through affiliated membership groups, service contact groups and correspondents throughout the country. The National Council assists in the organization and program of work of local groups which are usually called Councils.

These Councils follow a plan initiated by the National Board in 1916 of having a membership composed of representatives from many organizations, cultural, educational, recreational, religious, and civic, so that they typify the original movement for community participation in the development and best use of the motion picture as recreation and education.

The objectives of such organizations are as follows:

To demonstrate through the education of public opinion, the effectiveness of selection and classification, instead of censorship, as a means of forwarding the development of the motion picture and its best uses.

To encourage through open meetings, forums, classes and other means, the study of the motion picture as a medium of entertainment, education and artistic expression.

To concentrate the attention of the public on specific worthwhile films through the publication of a Photoplay Guide to the selected pictures being currently shown at local theatres.

To arrange family Friday night or week-end programs of selected films, and junior matinees of pictures particularly suited to the tastes of children, through cooperation with local exhibitors.

To endorse and further the use of visual education through motion pictures in the schools.

To arrange and promote occasional exhibitions of exceptional and cultural films that would not normally be shown in the commercial theatres.

### PUBLICATIONS

The National Board of Review and its Council as an aid to the groups carrying out these objectives furnishes an informational service through its publications.

#### National Board of Review Magazine (monthly)

\$2.00 a year for individual subscriptions  
\$1.00 a year to Council or club groups

#### Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures

\$2.50 a year when taken alone, available at a special rate of \$1.00 in conjunction with the Magazine.

#### Selected Pictures Catalog (annual) \_\_\_\_\_ 25c

#### Special Film Lists \_\_\_\_\_ 10c ea.

Such as Selected Films for Children's Showings, Selected Book-Films, Educational Films, etc.

#### National Board of Review—Its Background, Growth and Present Status \_\_\_\_\_ free

#### National Board of Review—How It Works \_\_\_\_\_ free

#### A Plan and a Program for Community

Motion Picture Councils \_\_\_\_\_ 10c



# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

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NOV 3 1936  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION



M. Alerme and Mlle. Rosay in "La Kermesse Heroique" (see page 10)

*Published monthly, except July and August, by the  
National Board of Review of Motion Pictures*

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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

- f ADVENTURE IN MANHATTAN — Jean Arthur, Joel McCrea. Magazine story "Purple and Fine Linen" by May Edington. Directed by Edward Ludwig. Clever and amusing mystery romance concerned with a famed young criminologist, an international thief who steals famous art works and a young actress. Columbia.
- f APRIL ROMANCE—Richard Tauber, Jana Baxter. Screenplay by Franz Schulz and John Drinkwater. Directed by Paul L. Stein. An English-made picture with a German star as singer — old-fashioned romantic operetta founded on the life of Schubert. The mixture of German and British accents detracts from its naturalness and the story is trite, but the singing of Schubert songs by Richard Tauber is thoroughly worthwhile. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f BIG BROADCAST OF 1937, THE—Jack Benny, Burns and Allen. Screen play by Erwin Gelsey, Arthur Kober and Barry Trivers. Directed by Mitchell Leisen. A fast-moving, highly entertaining musical show, with good music, clever dialogue and plenty of comedy, all about a radio romance. Paramount.
- f BIG GAME, THE—Phillip Huston, Andy Devine, James Gleason, June Travis. Adapted from Francis Wallace's *Colliers* serial. Directed by George Nichols, Jr. Though there is the usual last minute victory for the hero this is a cleverly contrived football story, with interesting twists to the plot, a certain significance beyond the mere game in the Big Business elements, and a more convincing use than usual of real football stars. RKO-Radio.
- f CAIN AND MABEL—Marion Davies, Clark Gable. Screenplay by H. C. Witwer. Directed by Lloyd Bacon. A swell wise-cracking spectacular song and dance show about a prizefighter and a Broadway star whose tender emotions are guided by publicity. Warner.
- f CAPTAIN'S KID, THE—Guy Kibbee, Sybil Jason, May Robson. Screenplay by Erle Fenton. Directed by Nick Grinde. A rural comedy, in which an old captain's tales of pirates and treasure so convince a little girl that she gets him into trouble. First National.
- f CASE OF THE BLACK CAT, THE—Ricardo Cortez, June Travis. Screenplay by Erle Stanley Gardner. Directed by William McGann. One of the Perry Mason mysteries, in which a cat points the way to the solution. The outcome is more surprising than credible, but it is an interesting plot. First National.
- f \*CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE, THE—Errol Flynn, Patric Knowles, Olivia de Havilland. Screenplay by Michael Jacoby. Directed by Michael Curtiz. An interesting fictionizing of the incident immortalized in Tennyson's poem, in a stunning production which reaches a fine climax in the ride into the "valley of death." Suggested for schools and libraries. Warner.
- f CODE OF THE RANGE—Charles Starrett. Story by Peter B. Kyne. Directed by C. C. Coleman, Jr. A range war between cattlemen and sheepmen done with less of the wild and wooly effect of most Westerns of its type. Columbia.
- f COME CLOSER FOLKS—James Dunn, Marian Marsh. Screenplay by Aben Kandel. Directed by D. Ross Lederman. An amusing comedy of rapid-fire salesmanship in which a young man not only made over an old-fashioned store into a money-making concern but also changed the church mouse owner into a butterfly. Columbia.
- m \*CRAIG'S WIFE—Rosalind Russell, John Boles. Play by George Kelly. Directed by Dorothy Arzner. A keen study of a woman who married for security instead of love, and what her selfishness brought to her home. The film deals honestly with the play from which it was taken, and is so well done it makes excellent adult screen fare. Columbia.
- fj DANIEL BOONE—George O'Brien, Heather Angel, John Carradine. Screenplay by Edgecumb Pinchon. Directed by David Howard. Highly satisfactory entertainment. The story of the early settlers in Kentucky and their troubles with the Indians led against them by a white renegade, is excitingly told and

(Continued on page 11)



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# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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## Discussions on the Movies

*A series to suggest how groups and clubs may investigate some of the aspects of the motion picture.*

By JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

### What Is a Motion Picture?

I.

THE motion picture (or cinema, or movie, whatever is the habit of calling it) is still young, as one has heard often for many years. More important, it is still growing. Growing, and therefore changing, as an art form. Ten years ago an imposing list of masterpieces had been made, and critics (not reviewers) were pretty sure they knew what "cinematic" meant, and exactly what a true movie was, esthetically. Then sound and spoken dialogue came into use on the screen, and critics uttered pained cries: their definitions didn't fit any more: the "pure" art of cinema had been bastardized.

Such cries are still uttered from time to time, but no one who has kept his head believes any longer that good movies stopped being made when Al Jolson could be heard when he sang, as well as seen. As more years pass other things will inevitably happen to change the form and technique, and the effect, of the motion picture. Is it possible to discover if there are any fundamental principles that make a motion picture a motion picture, in the sense that poetry is poetry, or music is music, no matter what changes happen to the form?

A thing has to *be* before it can be defined. Many short stories had to be writ-

ten before the esthetic analyst could investigate them and decide whether merely being short made a story a short-story, or whether other elements weren't necessary. The definition of a novel, though the form is some two hundred years old, has to be kept elastic, for too much rigidity leaves no place for the occasional new departure from accepted forms which still has to be called a novel because there is nothing else to call it. Even such a mild difference in narrative procedure as Aldous Huxley uses in *Eyeless in Gaza* has made a good deal of disturbance among reviewers. Can it be a "good" novel, they ask, perceiving a difference of form without appreciating its effect. Bound by their previous conception they have to call it bad, or change their rules.

The movie is still very much in the process of becoming, and the maker of definitions has to keep open-minded. Something may come along next month—and oh would that it would!—to stretch today's notion of good movie-making into something broader and deeper.

Any such rigid definition of form as that, for instance, of a sonnet, would be rash and silly. The number of feet in the length of film used, or the dimensions of the frame in which the picture appears, obviously have little to do with the essentials. Other

elements just as obviously have so much to do that merely to name them seems superfluous: that a movie is made with a camera, that it consists of a series of pictures so made, put together in such a way that when they are projected upon some surface where they can be looked at they give the illusion of continuous motion.

In other words—to go on with the obvious—those little frames of picture are what the movie-maker uses to create with, as the musician uses tones, the writer words, the painter paint. If the pictures are colored, or have a third dimension, or a fringe of sound embroidered on the edge, there is no essential change: they still are pictures, to be put together into a movie. The important question is what does the movie-maker do with them? And most important of all, what does he do with them that couldn't be done as effectively with paint, or musical tones, or words, or on a stage with actors in the flesh?

There is a general habit of thinking of the pictured story as the most important kind of movie—it is surely the most popular, though the material movies can use is limited only by what can be visualized. News is material for motion pictures, and geography, and history, many of the sciences, even political campaigns. But not many movie houses flourish if they show only such material. People generally seem satisfied with as little actuality as possible in the movies: they want an improvement upon actuality, a selection and interpretation. For selection and interpretation you have to have understanding and imagination, and once you have those working creatively you are on the road that leads to art.

So there are two good reasons why the pictured story is worth looking into: because it is the most widely interesting, and because it is the type most likely to produce something on a level with the best in literature or the drama or music. Any intelligent person not averse to examining the emotions with the mind can work out a standard for these movies not necessarily too personal, without fear of being on the wrong track. For so far no absolutely right track has been laid out—the motion picture has no Aris-

totle who has set final rules for it. If one wants to go a bit further than merely saying "I like it" or "I don't like it," all that is necessary is first to understand the nature of the movie (just as one has to understand something of the nature of music before venturing to form any judgment that goes beyond mere personal preference) and then to examine the quality of the special example under consideration. Quality is of course what finally makes a movie good or bad.

Some widening or correction or reassurance of judgment almost always comes out of any intelligent discussion of movies among a group of alert and inquiring minds really interested in the essentials of what they are talking about. But if the discussion is to be more than haphazard there ought to be some aim and form to it—a kind of program, or at least something in the way of a definite subject. At the risk of sounding like an examination paper, here are some suggestions that might be considered in a preliminary inquiry into the nature of the motion picture, with some reference to the quality of special examples.

The important thing in the first place is not to be led astray by something that may turn out to be unessential, as so many estheticians were by the silent films. Look back at a couple of "old masters," if you happen to have seen them:

*The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* used to be called the perfect motion picture because it was all pictures, with no sub-titles. A few years later came *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, which seems in memory to have been pretty nearly half sub-titles, and yet was called a great film. Did the matter of sub-titles have anything to do with the greatness of either? What is the memorable thing about them both—story, characters, or total effect? What was the effect, and how was it created? Could a play or a book have done as much and as well?

The old sub-titles are gone for the most part, though occasionally a screen-writer uses one to cover time lapses—a quicker, and, it usually seems, a lazier way of getting the story along than contriving that the story get itself along. Speech has taken



their place, and the term "talkies," which isn't heard so much now, is really its own criticism of itself: it implies that there is more talkie than movie, that the screen uses words more than action. What is the limit where a motion picture contains too much talk to be a true motion picture? You hear a man making a speech in a newsreel—we see it on a screen, created by the machinery of motion pictures but no more what we mean by a movie than a man exercising on a rowing machine is what we mean by a boat-race. Often in "shorts" we fidget through a reel or two of chatter-chatter, usually intended to be comic—is it tiresome merely because it fails to be funny, or because after all what we are looking for is to see something happening?

The heart of the question seems to lie in the word itself: *motion picture*, *movie*. There is movement in it. It is getting along, in some direction, to some end, and getting along not only in the dimension of space but in the dimension of time. One foot of film adds itself to another, one moment of time succeeds to another, and it *moves*. And with movies that have the greatest effect we find that they move not only intransitively, visually before our eyes, but transitively: they move the spectator, doing something to his emotions. And with all this the question of words—speech or subtitles—is not a question of words or no words, but a question of how words (or other sound, or color, or what-not) help or hinder.

There's another point about movement: is it mere motion, which like a machine operates automatically in space, or growth, where in the dimension of time we can see and know that something is building itself, adding with each passing moment something to what has gone before and creating the illusion of a living organism?

People who take their movies as something more than mere pastime, like picking up a magazine story or casually turning on the radio, cannot help becoming critical, and as they become more consciously so they find themselves giving attention not only to how a thing is done but to *what* is being done, often deciding that a given thing

wasn't important enough to have been done at all, however well. But leaving out the question of importance for a while, the question of quality depends to a very interesting extent on what is being attempted.

The business principle that makes all the other producers hurry to follow suit with any type of film that one of them has made a success with, supplies plenty of field for comparison of quality in similar but different attempts.

Take the perennial Western. (And by the way, why is the Western perennial? Is it anything more than the constant arrival among audiences of a new generation of youngsters to whom the type is new?) What is a Western, essentially? How is an elaborate production like King Vidor's *The Texas Rangers* any better than some film of Buck Jones', or John Wayne's, or Bob Steele's, which aren't nearly so elaborate? Do Westerns really get any better? What is the matter with them if they don't?

Take detective stories, which for some reason that hasn't been explained never used to go well on the screen in the silent days, but which flourish mightily now that the actors can talk. What made *The Thin Man* a model which every maker of detective films seems to try to follow? Was its appeal in its plot, or in something else? How far can mere plot carry a detective story to success?

Take the kid pictures—the films which exist for Shirley Temple or Freddie Bartholomew or Jane Withers, or the occasional others in which the most important character is David Holt, perhaps, or Sybil Jason or some other child. Are they for children, or about children, and are the children real? Where would *The Devil Is a Sissy* stand among such films? Have any of them any standing as real motion pictures?

Take the musicals. Those with singers—Lawrence Tibbett, Lily Pons, Grace Moore, Nino Martini. Those with dancing—the Astaire-Rogers films, or the various *Melodies* and *Broadcasts*. Are they just shows, or are some of them really movies?

There are other groups, each one of a more or less definite class, and after the

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## Miss Crowley Joins the Council

THE National Motion Picture Council of the National Board of Review is happy to welcome into its membership Miss Kathleen Crowley. This closer affiliation, as a member of the advisory group of the Council, follows a contact dating back to 1919, ten years after the Board's formation. Miss Crowley's first activity was as a member of the Review Committee.

Her early motion picture interest found expression in her program work with young people when, in 1925, she went to Waterbury, Conn., as Director of the Waterbury Girls' Club. She recognized the importance of the motion picture and the need to use it in organization activity. Junior matinees, theatre, school, and newspaper cooperation—all the matters of community motion picture activity received her attention in the extensive Club program, and she worked whole heartedly with and for the local Better Films Committee.

Motion pictures were also used by Miss Crowley in a community health education program. These health films were not shown non-theatrically to small groups but to large audiences in the theatres through Miss Crowley's efforts in securing the co-operation of the managers. She relates as an example of the educational value of health films, that after one was run on dental hygiene the corner druggist reported to her he had to put in an extra supply of tooth brushes.

Extending her community interest in the motion pictures, Miss Crowley was instrumental in getting the Waterbury Chamber of Commerce to include in a Recreation Survey made in 1927, pertinent questions on motion pictures and motion picture usage.

More recently, Miss Crowley has combined two important positions in Waterbury having to do with young people, serving as Juvenile Probation Officer, as well as Director of the Girls' Club.

In 1935, Miss Crowley started a Junior Motion Picture study group, in line with the new approach to the subject of motion



*Outside the theatre where one of Miss Crowley's health showings was given.*

pictures and young people, in which the purpose is not so much arranging special programs but in getting the young people, through the study of motion picture appreciation, to become discriminating theatre patrons who know and properly judge films. Local managers, Miss Crowley says, send word of their advance bookings to the Waterbury organization and after these lists have been checked with the National Board's publications, the teachers then draw attention to the films considered worthwhile and informal discussion follows, which brings up many subjects of interest showing what the young people are thinking.

Miss Crowley was educated at Notre Dame Academy and Boston Conservatory of Music. Her educational and community activities have included positions as—Playground Supervisor; Physical Director at a Junior High School; Assistant School Principal; Vocational Advisor—Federal Board for Vocational Education; Dean, Scudder School for Young Women, New York; Instructor Physical Education, Columbia University; Director, Parents Association Playground, Horace Mann School, New York; Lecturer on Recreation, Ohio State University. Among her special activities she made surveys of the Dance Halls and Community Centers of New York City for

*(Continued on page 13)*



# Better Critics Make Better Films

By WALTER SPEARMAN

*Experiences in teaching motion picture appreciation at the University of North Carolina, are here related by Mr. Spearman, Journalism Instructor at the University, formerly dramatic critic for the Charlotte, N. C., News and President of the Charlotte Better Films Committee, who thus writes from a knowledge gained in varied fields of motion picture activity.*

**“W**HAT do you consider the Ten Best Pictures of 1936 and what are your reasons for the first choice?

“What was the worst picture you saw in 1936?

“What actor and actress gave the best performance of the year and why do you think so?”

That will be the first day's lesson for students who register in the Motion Picture Appreciation course at the University of North Carolina January 1, 1937.

In answer to similar questions last year the students selected these movies as the best of the season: *Mutiny on the Bounty* (first place with a vote from every student), *David Copperfield*, *Naughty Marietta*, *The Informer*, *Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, *Les Misérables*, *Ruggles of Red Gap*, *Top Hat*, *Alice Adams* and *The Scoundrel*.

The best actor of the year was declared to be Charles Laughton for his performances in *Mutiny on the Bounty* and *Ruggles of Red Gap*, the best actress Katharine Hepburn for her *Alice Adams*.

For the first time in the history of the University a course in motion picture appreciation—and criticism—was given. It came as a part of Journalism 60—“book reviewing, drama reviewing and movie reviewing for newspapers.” And its reception was warm enough to insure its remaining in the curriculum.

No “home work” seems more pleasant to college students than going to the movies. And nothing seems to come more naturally to them than criticizing. But a course in motion picture appreciation implies more than seeing pictures and labelling them

“swell” or “lousy.” With criticism or with appreciation comes the inevitable word “why?” If a movie is good, then the students should be able to explain why they think so. If bad, they must analyze the reasons.

So after they have had their fun of picking their “ten best,” the students are always asked to tell why. Here a background of critical reading is a definite advantage—from Aristotle's *Art of Poetry* down through Pater, Arnold, Sainte-Beuve, Anatole France (remember his “A critic is one who relates the adventures of his soul among masterpieces”), Wilde and Poe to the very latest essays of George Jean Nathan and the reviews in the daily papers, *Time* or the *New Yorker*. When a new picture of importance is released, the students compare the reviews in various publications and then check with their own impressions of the picture.

After they have seen the standards set by other critics, after they have weighed in the balance of reviewing both the set standards of classicism and the impressionistic standards of romanticism, they try to work out their own system of judging motion pictures.

They study the history of the motion picture, learn something of its development from the early days of *The Great Train Robbery* down through the first sound accompaniment, the first talkies, the first technicolor. Last year one student who was especially interested in the technical phase of picture making prepared and read a series of papers on lighting, photography and sound mechanism.

Each picture that the students see is thoroughly discussed in class, usually to the accompaniment of violent statements and equally violent objections. With the appearance of *Captain Blood* last season, the boys unanimously welcomed Olivia de Havilland as a promising new star of merit while the co-eds found her utterly lacking in in-

terest or attraction. This year the same reaction will probably be seen in discussions of Simone Simon.

The young critics break the picture up into its component elements and seek to evaluate the acting, the direction, the script, the continuity, the dialogue, the lighting, the photography, the sets. In last year's decisions they gave the best acting palm to Charles Laughton because they decided that Victor McLaglen's superb performance in *The Informer* was due to direction rather than acting ability. And they rated *Alice Adams* well above *Anna Karenina* because they felt that the final scene in the film version of Tolstoi's novel, with Fredric March looking soulfully at Garbo's picture, had succeeded magnificently in spoiling the entire effect of the Great Garbo's acting and the deft handling of the death scene at the train.

Daily film fare in a college town furnishes plenty of material for a motion picture course—good movies, bad movies, mediocre movies—and some of the worst pictures make the best object lessons for students who want to know "why."

But here at Chapel Hill the students have an added advantage in being able to see the best pictures now being made in other countries. English films are shown regularly along with the Hollywood products. And several times a month special "midnight" showings are held at 11:15 P.M., after the day's movie has been run, of German, French and Spanish motion pictures, to which flock students from the German, French and Spanish departments as well as students particularly interested in the motion picture as an art. Mr. E. Carrington Smith, manager of the local theatre, who studies his college-student audience very carefully, finds the foreign pictures have a strong appeal and are constantly drawing better midnight audiences.

Outside speakers are frequently invited in to talk to the class. Last season Manager Smith himself dropped by to discuss reactions of a theater manager and to explain the problems of bookings, advertising, box office, etc., which confront the business staff of a theater. He cheerfully answered

a barrage of questions and promised to return to meet this year's new critical crop.

And a very popular guest speaker was Miss Evelyn Gerstein, of New York, member of the Committee on Exceptional Photoplays of the National Board of Review, film critic and writer, who not only told of her recent experiences in studying the Russian stage and screen but also presented some of her criteria for judging motion pictures, using *The Informer* as an example of what might be done in the movies. Paul Green, playwright and movie scenarist, is to be one of the 1937 guests.

But someone will doubtless ask "Why send boys and girls to college just to learn to see movies? They do that too much at home now!"

A whole argument can easily be advanced as to the part motion pictures play in a modern youth's education, their influence on his thinking, his actions, his morals, his attitude toward life. Their role is undoubtedly more important than that of any professor or group of professors—and any influence of such significance is worthy of investigation in a college curriculum.

First, however, I should reply that a course in motion picture appreciation not only trains young journalists to write interesting and intelligent newspaper reviews on movies and drama (and certainly this in itself would be invaluable—if you don't think so, just read the movie columns in most papers!) but it also trains a superior motion picture audience. When students have learned to look critically at the screen, to analyze a picture and recognize its merits and demerits, then those students will go out into their own communities and demand "better films." This demand will in turn bring about improved motion pictures to satisfy the critical audience. And the improved quality of motion pictures will in turn educate better audiences, and so it goes in a constantly widening circle of improvement!

Here at the University of North Carolina students are already inquiring about the "movie course," which will be given after Christmas. And as I watch the year's



output of new movies I am wondering which ones will be included upon the students' list of "Ten Best." Will *The Story of Louis Pasteur*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Ghost Goes West*, *Fury*, *Green Pastures*, *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* and *Dodsworth* find their places in the ten—or will they be shoved downward by other pictures now in the Hollywood making?

But there's one thing certain, the students will not fail to criticize. They are willing to ask "why?" and to pick the pictures apart like a watch to find what makes them click. Of such is the kingdom of critics—and from such will come the impetus which brings about "better films."



## BOOK REVIEWS

### How to Write a Movie

By Arthur L. Gale

THIS book, written by the editor of *Movie Makers*, is not intended to be a guide to people who want to get to Hollywood, "into the movies," but for that always growing number who are content to be called amateurs—amateurs not in the sense of being crude and unskilled in their workmanship but in the sense of working for the love of it, not professionally. Any sincere amateur wants his work to be good, and since it is being more and more apparent that movies can be a personal art, a personal expression, as well as factory-made and Big Business, Mr. Gale's book should be valuable to a lot of people. It is sensible and useful, presenting the essentials of true movie-making simply but comprehensively, covering all the ground that the movie-maker must know thoroughly while he makes his working plans for what is to be a motion picture.

J. S. H.

Published by Edmond Byrne Hackett, \$2.

### Theatre Collections in Libraries and Museums

*An International Handbook by Rosamund Gilder and George Freedley.*

THIS book, published under the auspices of the New York Public Library and the National Theatre Conference, with the cooperation of the American Library Association, contains a careful list of collections of material relevant to the theatre in libraries and museums all over the world, as well as bibliography of what such material has been catalogued. It is invaluable for a student of the theatre, and contains, incidentally, something about the beginnings that have been made in collecting motion picture material in libraries and museums. Miss Gilder is on the staff of the Theatre Arts monthly and Mr. Freedley is librarian in charge of the Theatre Collection of the New York Public Library.

J. S. H.

Published by Theatre Arts, Inc., Price \$1.50.

Combining of Library and Theatre interest brings to mind the question of motion picture plans for Book Week, November 15th to 21st. For this Week the National Board as usual has compiled its annual Selected Book-Films list. Available at 10c from this office.

### What Is a Motion Picture?

(Continued from page 5)

more immediate personal question of whether you care for the class or not, and find entertainment in it, you can examine them more searchingly and find out where they stand among the films that are remembered, and which there is an audience for year after year.

The second paper in this discussion series on the subject "Novels and Plays on the Screen" will appear in the following issue of the magazine.

# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS

## DEPARTMENT

*This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of Exceptional and Honorable*

*Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.*

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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## La Kermesse Heroique

(CARNIVAL IN FLANDERS)

*Screen play by Bernard Zimmer from a story by Charles Spaak; directed by Jacques Feyder; photographed by Harry Stradling, Louis Page and Andre Thomas; settings by Lazare Meerson; music by Louis Beydts. Produced by Films Sonores Tobis, Epinay-sur-Seine, France; distributed by American Tobis Corp.*

### The cast

<i>The Burgomaster</i>	.....	Alerme
<i>Madame Burgomaster</i>	.....	Françoise Rosay
<i>The Duke</i>	.....	Jean Murat
<i>The Priest</i>	.....	Louis Javet
<i>Siska</i>	.....	Micheline Cheirel
<i>Julien Breughel</i>	.....	Bernard Lancet
<i>The Fishmonger</i>	.....	Arthur Devere
<i>The Fishwife</i>	.....	Lynne Clevers
<i>The Baker</i>	.....	Marcel Carpenter
<i>The Baker's Wife</i>	.....	Maryse Wendling
<i>The Inn-Keeper</i>	.....	Pierre Labry
<i>The Inn-keeper's Wife</i>	.....	Ginette Gaubert
<i>The Butcher</i>	.....	Alfred Adam
<i>The Brewer's Wife</i>	.....	Marguerite Ducourt
<i>The Captain</i>	.....	Alexander D'Arcy
<i>The Lieutenant</i>	.....	Claude Saint Val
<i>The Dwarf</i>	.....	Delphin

THIS film, winner of the Grand Prix du Cinema Francais and the Gold Medal of the Venice International Exposition of Cinematography, wears its resounding honors lightly, as gay a piece as anything you can find in many a year. It is that miraculous achievement, an historical picture so lively and engaging that all the labor and research that must have gone into its excellence are hidden beneath the surface, like the bones and muscles of a graceful human figure. Looking, almost smelling, like the early seventeenth century, it has nevertheless the vitality of a life still

being lived. It might so easily have fallen into the deadness of a stuffed museum piece—but it is far more vividly alive than most of the films that picture people of today.

It is a comedy, of the time of the Spanish invasion of Flanders, and in the town of Boom, arraying itself for the ceremonials and gaities of its annual carnival—its *kermesse*—a messenger suddenly arrives announcing the approach of a troop of Spanish soldiers who will quarter themselves there for the night. The burghers, all ready for their holiday, are terrified by the memory of recent war horrors, enemy fighters invading, destroying, raping, killing, and the burgomaster has suddenly a scheme that may save them from violence: he will pretend to be dead, lying on his bier with the town in mourning: perhaps the enemy will have respect for their grief and move on, or at least be kind to them.

But the burgomaster's wife is not so panic stricken. Resourceful housewife and mother, taking domestic and civic affairs in her competent stride, she has a higher sense of the town's dignity than her stuffy spouse and his stuffy councillors, as well as a shrewd understanding of men, be they enemies or husbands. While the frantic lords of Boom take to the Burgomaster's chamber, she rallies the women, and plans a different welcome for the advancing soldiery. The Spanish duke and his men are met at the gate with arms invitingly open, and with the huge symbolic key of the city, which will open more than arms.

The invaders, treated with amiability, are amiable in turn, and there is gaiety instead of violence to fill the night hours. The silly



ruse of the burgomaster is discovered, but it makes no difference. Each enemy, from the duke commander whose lordliness conceals an occasional loneliness of heart to the toughest pikeman of the ranks, finds gentle surcease from the war, and in the morning they march away garland-wreathed, and a good time was had by all except the cowering husbands. And Madame Burgomaster, in the intervals of her masterly generalship of the whole affair relaxing into a renewal of her girlhood, has not only a good time but a profitable: always practical, she manages to circumvent a loveless marriage that has been planned for her oldest daughter, and wears a handsome string of jewels as she waves farewell to the duke—a present for the daughter's happy wedding. And the men come forth from their hiding, and the burgomaster is hailed as the savior of the town.

The whole film, whose comedy entirely escapes the trivial by springing from the indigenous ways and follies of human nature, is done in a handsome and high-spirited fashion. For a costume piece it is amazingly vital, like old Dutch paintings come to life. The sets are solid and substantial, with the air of being lived in, and beautifully photographed. The costumes especially look as if they were everyday apparel—we even have refreshing hints of how people got into and out of such gear, and of what it was like to have to bother with a neck frill.

Enriching the whole thing is a fine mellowness, a quality of an older civilization in which vital human elements functioned in the way of nature, without too much fuss or being sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought. This grows out of the material of the story, and the sure-handed way the director has managed its picturing, but most of all out of the robust and full-blooded performance of most of the actors. Françoise Rosay dominates everything with her superb *Madame Burgomaster*, a hearty and illuminating piece of acting, masterly in an astonishing mass of detail that sums up into a complete, living portrait. The men are equally good within their lessened scope, the provincial rotarians of Boom and the more travelled visitors—especially the priest

with his solemnity ever so faintly twinkling and his indescribable air of caustic tolerance, and the urbane duke. Only the young lovers could fit into an ordinary film without wrecking it with their vitality—they are like most screen lovers, pretty and unimportant.

J. S. H.



## Selected Pictures Guide

(Continued from page 2)

beautifully photographed. Suggested for schools and libraries. RKO-Radio.

- f DIMPLES—Shirley Temple, Frank Morgan. Screenplay by Arthur Sheekman and Nat Perrin. Directed by William Seiter. A little girl's troubles in trying to make an honest man of her grandfather, who had a habit of taking things that didn't belong to him. Shirley Temple sings and dances and even acts Little Eva, in her usual extraordinary way. 20th Century-Fox.

- m \*DODSWORTH—Walter Huston, Ruth Chatterton, Mary Astor. Novel by Sinclair Lewis. Directed by William Wyler. Faithfully following the play which Sidney Howard made from Lewis' book about a retired business man whose wife is turned into an irritating snob by European travel. A fine study of two types of Americans splendidly acted and impeccably produced. United Artists.

- f EAST MEETS WEST — George Arliss. Screenplay by Edwin Greenwood. Directed by Herbert Mason. A story of adventure and intrigue, with Arliss as the Sultan of a small country, which he is trying to keep in peace and prosperity with Great Britain and a militaristic Oriental country on either side of him. Colorful and full of movement, with Arliss in the crafty sort of part he does so well. The cast is good. Gaumont-British.

- f GAY DESPERADO, THE—Nino Martini, Leo Carrillo, Ida Lupino. Screenplay by Leo Birinski. Directed by Rouben Mamoulian. A gay and colorful comedy about Mexican bandits and the effect of American gangster films on their professional technique. Pleasant and amusing, with many hilarious minor incidents. United Artists.

(Continued on page 13)

## Children and the Films in England

*There is no lessening of interest in the subject of children and the motion picture but that interest no longer is concerned so much with the influence of the motion picture on children, but rather is directed toward carefully guided attendance upon pictures children will like and an intelligent fact finding of what they do like. We all know what has been done, and is being done, in this country in the spreading of audience classification information on films, the modification of admission regulations for children and the activity of the Young Reviewers and Junior Photoplay Clubs. Questions have a number of times been made to us about England's plan and we believe therefore that editorial comment appearing in a recent issue of "Sight and Sound," the journal of the British Film Institute, will be of interest to our readers. With the kind permission of that publication, we reprint here "Films for Children," which shows that that country too finds this a problem yet unsolved but one, as in this country, nearer solution as it receives more of both interested thought and action.*

THERE are between five and six million children between the age of five and sixteen at school in this country. In most districts children under sixteen are not admitted, or are not supposed to be admitted, to cinemas during the showing of an "A" film unless they are accompanied by a parent or a responsible adult. Most cinema programmes consist of two feature films; the larger proportion of feature films bear an "A" certificate and most programmes usually consist of one "A" film and one "U" film. "A" films are generally to be regarded as unsuitable for children, but final responsibility is left with their parents. "U" films are regarded as not unsuitable or as harmless for children. It is natural that, in general, films should be produced and cinemas run in the interests of adults since they form the larger proportion of cinema-goers. In some districts, however, local cinema managers organize children's matinees, but the programmes shown at them usually consist of whatever "U" films happen to be in the programme for the week. Only in a few districts have children's matinees been organized, often by teachers and

cinema managers in co-operation, for which the films are carefully selected as being positively suitable for children. But the efforts which have been made until now to provide film programmes specifically for children have been negligible in comparison with the number of children to be catered for and the opportunities (and dangers) latent in the attendance of children at cinemas as their main form of entertainment.

The recent meeting of the Child Welfare Committee of the League of Nations and the conference in London called by the Public Morality Council and the Cinema Christian Council, and the public interest aroused by these meetings show that educational, social and film trade organizations recognize the need for constructive and positive efforts, based on real information and understanding, to ensure, not so much that children come to no harm in the cinema, but that they obtain good entertainment suitable to their age and needs. "Nothing but the best" as was stated at a recent conference "is good enough for them."

From organized enquiries among children, from observation at cinemas, and from the experience of those who have tried to cater specifically for children, we know what, in general, children like and dislike. They like to be interested, excited, and amused. They do not like to be frightened or bored. We know that many "U" films, although harmless, bore them because, for example, the stories are too involved or too wordy and, on the other hand, that they often lack just those elements of action, suspense, and excitement which children desire and which they can find in "A" films which may, in other respects, be unsuitable for them.

We know, also, that children like films "of real life," films based on history, and films of well-known books which they read. Films of these types are from time to time produced, but they are produced for adults, and not for children, who seem to have more exacting standards than many of their



parents. It is probable that their expressed dislike, for example, for Mae West or Frankenstein films is due to the fact that children are unable, or unwilling, either from experience or by imagination, to comprehend such phenomena as part of real life. On the other hand, free adaptations or blatant alterations of stories which children have read or of history as they know it, seriously affect the entertainment value for children of films based on well known stories and history. They cannot appreciate the adult reasons which justify such alterations. In view of the vivid and lasting impression made on children by films it is desirable that such discrimination should be encouraged and satisfied.

The specific films which children like may be G-men films this year, or air films last year, or whatever other cycle the adult cinema happens to be passing through. But the basic elements of appeal are the same. Occasionally they are found in films which are not only free from any possibly harmful associations and from ideas too mature for children, but which also present real pictures of subjects, peoples, and countries in which children are interested and activities and qualities which at school, they have been taught to admire and emulate. These are the types of films which would seem to be positively suitable for children during the impressionable years between five and sixteen.

The Governors of the British Film Institute have decided to arrange a conference of educational, social, and film trade organizations to see what practical and concrete methods can be found to provide first-class cinema entertainment for children. More information is obviously needed on many points; for example, on the extent of child cinema-going and on how often they do, in fact, go to cinemas accompanied by parents and how often they go alone. More scientific examination is needed of the film likes and dislikes of children in the light of modern psychological and educational theory and practice.

With increased knowledge and realization of the size and urgency of the problem, and assuming full co-operation between the

public and the film trade, it should be possible to evolve methods which might lead in time to the provision of children's films and children's cinemas, just as there are children's books and children's libraries.

In calling the conference, the Governors of the British Film Institute are not seeking to prove any pre-conceived theory, but to ascertain facts. Action devised to ensure good and suitable entertainment at the cinema both for children and adults, if it is to succeed, must be based on facts. The solution of this urgent problem should be in the best interests of cinemagoers and film trade alike.

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### Miss Crowley

(Continued from page 6)

the Department of Recreation and of Ex-service men in States Prisons for the United States Veterans Bureau. She has been made Honorary Member of International Lions Club in recognition of her work for Girls, and she has contributed extensively to various publications.

Miss Crowley's wide experience, her many activities and her long interest in and appreciation of the motion picture will serve to make her a most valued member of the Council.

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### Selected Pictures Guide

(Continued from page 11)

- f IN HIS STEPS—Eric Linden, Cecilia Parker. Suggested by Charles M. Sheldon's novel. Directed by Karl Brown. How a young couple of rich parentage eloped and learned self-reliance, and after the trial of the youthful husband on a charge of kidnapping the girl the hostile parents are reconciled. Full of good characterizations and amusing incidents, to counter-act the rather machine-made plot, which has only the remotest connection with the novel from which it takes its title. Grand National.
- f ISLE OF FURY—Humphrey Bogart, Donald Woods, Margaret Lindsay. Screenplay by Robert Andrews and William Jacobs. Directed by Frank McDonald. A tale of a South Sea Island where pearls are dived for, and the surprising outcome of the hunt for a murderer. Lively action, which covers up some hurried plot construction. Warner.

- m LADIES IN LOVE—Janet Gaynor, Loretta Young, Constance Bennett, Simone Simon. Screenplay by Ladislaus Bus-Fekete. Directed by Edward H. Griffith. From a Hungarian original, a story of four girls and their different ways of going after love—and the effect their individual aims had on the outcome. Continental in setting and atmosphere. 20th Century-Fox.
- 
- m LEGION OF TERROR—Bruce Cabot, Marguerite Churchill. Screenplay by Bert Ganat. Directed by C. C. Coleman, Jr. Marshals from the Post Office Department on a hunt for the leaders of a Hooded Legion who are setting up a secret terroristic government. Close enough to things that have actually happened to give it interest and importance. Columbia.
- 
- m \*LIBELED LADY—Myrna Loy, William Powell, Jean Harlow, Spencer Tracy. Screenplay by Wallace Sullivan. Directed by Jack Conway. An hilarious comedy of errors, growing out of a libel suit against a newspaper. Each of the numerous stars is lucky enough to have a very fitting part. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- 
- f LUCKIEST GIRL IN THE WORLD, THE—Jane Wyatt, Louis Hayward. Story "Kitchen Privileges" by Anne Jordan. Directed by Edward Buzzell. A light comedy—a rich girl trying to prove she could live on a small income if she married a poor man. She learned more about love than domestic economy. Generally bright and amusing. Universal.
- 
- f MAGNIFICENT BRUTE, THE—Victor McLaglen, Binnie Barnes. Liberty Magazine story "Big" by Owen Francis. Directed by John Blystone. A comedy drama of the steel mills. "Big" Steve Andrews comes to live in a steel town and immediately trouble starts. Big and blustering he wins his way into the hearts of a small boy and his mother. Well acted and holds the interest throughout. Universal.
- 
- f MAN I MARRY, THE—Doris Nolan, Michael Whalen. Novel by M. Coates Webster. Directed by Ralph Murphy. An amusing story about a wealthy young man who seeks seclusion to write a play, and a girl who is running away from marriage. Both wanting to be alone they seek the same deserted house and the fun starts. Clever dialogue. Universal.
- 
- f MAN WHO LIVED TWICE, THE—Ralph Bellamy, Isabel Jewel. Screenplay by Tom Van Dyke and Harry Altimus. Directed by Harry Lachman. The story of a transformation of a murderer into a valuable citizen by a surgical operation. The general tone is melodramatic, but the idea and its working out are interesting. Columbia.
- 
- f PIGSKIN PARADE—Stuart Erwin, Jack Haley, Patsy Kelly, Arline Judge. Screenplay by Arthur Sheekman, Nat Perrin and Mark Kelly. Directed by David Butler. Why and how a football team from a tiny Texas college came to play and beat Yale. More comedy than football, plentifully jazzed up with singing and dancing. 20th Century-Fox.
- 
- f PRESIDENT'S MYSTERY, THE—Henry Wilcoxon, Betty Furness. Liberty Magazine story by Rupert Hughes, Samuel Hopkins Adams, Anthony Abbot, S. S. Van Dine, John Erskine, Rita Weiman. Directed by Phil Rosen. The wealthy lawyer of a powerful corporation changes his identity and helps to establish a cooperatively run enterprise. Pretty good entertainment and a slight effort to deal with a timely problem. Republic.
- 
- fj ROSE BOWL—Tom Brown, Eleanore Whitney. Story "O'Reilly of Notre Dame" by Francis Wallace. Directed by Charles Barton. A football picture with romance and comedy and very little football. Paramount.
- 
- f TARZAN ESCAPES—Johnny Weissmuller, Maureen O'Sullivan. Based on stories by Edgar Rice Burroughs. Directed by Robert Thorpe. A thrilling and exciting adventure story, showing the capture of Tarzan, his escape and crowning happiness. Some nice photography. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- 
- m VALIANT IS THE WORD FOR CARRIE—Gladys George, Dudley Digges, John Howard, Arline Judge. Novel by Barry Bene-field. Directed by Wesley Ruggles. What happened to a woman of unsavory reputation when she undertook to bring up two orphans. Abounding in heart interest, and offering in her first important screen part an actress who will undoubtedly become a great favorite. Paramount.
- 
- f WITHOUT ORDERS—Sally Eilers, Robert Armstrong. Screenplay by Peter B. Kyne. Directed by Lew Landers. A story of transportation aviation—the playboy, stunt-flyer son of the big boss, the safe-and-sane ordinary pilot, and the girl who is a stewardess on the airliner. Some interesting characters, and the plot works up to an exciting climax. RKO-Radio.
- 
- m WOMAN REBELS, A—Katharine Hepburn, Herbert Marshall. Novel "The Portrait of a Rebel" by Netta Syrett. Directed by Mark Sandrich. A tense drama of a woman who fought for the rights of women and for her own happiness, in England before the time of woman's emancipation. Katharine Hepburn does a splendid piece of acting, and the production is well directed. RKO-Radio.



## Foreign Language Films

- f CIECA DI SORRENTO, LA (The Blind Girl of Sorrento)—Dria Paola, Mario Steni. Novel by Francesco Mastriani. Directed by Nunzio Malasomma. A melodramatic novel capably transferred to the screen, somewhat old-fashioned but interesting. It culminates in a girl who had gone blind as a child recovering her sight and recognizing the murderer of her mother. In Italian with English subtitles. Nuovo Mondo.
- f SODERKAKAR (Shanty-town) — Gideon Wahlburg, Edvard Persson. Screenplay by Gideon Wahlburg. Directed by Weyler Hildebrand. A pleasant domestic comedy-drama, in which two estranged brothers are brought together, with a love story interwoven with its intrigue. Swedish dialogue. Scandinavian Talking Pictures.
- m VARAN POJKE (Our Boy)—Edvard Persson. Directed by Arne Bornebusch. A comedy in Swedish—a simple domestic tale of a store-keeper's falling in love with a woman who has a son, and the complications in the way of their marriage. So full of talk that it could only interest someone acquainted with the language. Scandinavian Talking Pictures.

## SHORT SUBJECTS

### INFORMATIONALS

- f DEADLY FEMALES (Struggle to Live Series)—About spiders, centipedes and scorpions. Instructive more than attractive. Suggested for schools and libraries. RKO-Radio.
- f FIGHTING MARLIN (Spotlight Series)—Marlin fishing off the Florida coast. Paramount.
- f GOALS FOR GOLD AND GLORY—Training for football. RKO-Radio.
- f GOING PLACES NO. 28—Lowell Thomas takes us to Colorado. Universal.
- f GOING PLACES NO. 29—Mt. Olympus in Washington and salmon fishing in Oregon. Suggested for schools and libraries. Universal.
- fj GOING PLACES NO. 31—Rainbow Forest of petrified trees; glass blowers; Yang Tse River. Suggested for schools and libraries. Universal.
- fj GOING PLACES NO. 32—A trip to Jamaica. Suggested for schools and libraries. Universal.
- fj "HOLD 'EM COWBOY"—Interesting scenes of semi-wild range life. Columbia.
- f \*MARCH OF TIME NO. 2 (3rd Series)—Covering John L. Lewis and his fight to organize unskilled workers against the policy of the A. F. of L.; the history and present workings of the tithe system for supporting the Church of England; and the growth and present status of football as a big business, with special reference to subsidizing players. RKO-Radio.
- f MEMORIES OF SPAIN (Magic Carpet Series)—The usual excellent pictures but with more controversial comments than usual. 20th Century-Fox.
- fj \*NATURE'S SONGSTERS—Birds caught in their native haunts by the sound camera. Suggested for schools and libraries. Educational.
- f PACING THE THOROUGHBREDS (Adventures of a Newsreel Cameraman Series)—Lots of the famous race horses, and thrilling riding exploits. 20th Century-Fox.
- f PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 3—Gloria Hollister, explorer; Cuban lottery; training lions. Paramount.
- f PATHE TOPICS NO. 1—Virgin Islands; tuna fishing; gold mining. RKO-Radio.

- f PATHE TOPICS NO. 2—Aerial flight around Mt. McKinley; first motion picture projector; bird dog training. RKO-Radio.
- fj PHILIPPINE FANTASY (Magic Carpet Series)—Good, as usual. 20th Century-Fox.
- f PICTORIAL REVIEW NO. 2—Magazine miscellany, interesting and sometimes instructive. Vitaphone.
- f POPULAR SCIENCE NO. 2—Wonders in scientific world. Paramount.
- fj QUAIN T QUEBEC (Fitzpatrick Traveltalk)—City and province, in color. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f RAH RAH FOOTBALL—College football songs and bits of games. Paramount.
- fj \*SPORTS ON ICE—International ice carnival in Switzerland. Some fine effects obtained through slow motion. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f STAR GAZERS—Picture, done in color, showing advancement of the telescope. Columbia.
- f WONDER SPOTS OF AMERICA—The wonder of the Shenandoah Valley shown in color—Natural Bridge and the various Caverns; also Niagara Falls. Suggested for schools and libraries. Worth being kept permanently available. Columbia.

### CARTOONS

- fj BIRD IN LOVE—A Vacuum cleaner salesman tries to break up the happy home of two love birds—in color. Columbia.
- fj DONALD AND PLUTO—The strange and hilarious things that happened when Pluto swallowed a magnet. United Artists.
- fj HOLD THE WIRE—The heavy villain interrupts a telephone call and makes trouble for Popeye. Paramount.
- f I CAN'T ESCAPE FROM YOU (Bouncing Ball)—Some amusing phoney newsreels. Paramount.
- fj IN MY GONDOLA (Scrappy)—Fun in gondolas—in color. Columbia.
- fj LITTLE SWEET PEA (Popeye takes little Sweet Pea to the zoo. Paramount.
- fj \*MICKEY'S ELEPHANT—The arrival in Mickey Mouse's establishment of a young elephant to be Pluto's playmate. United Artists.
- fj PLAY SAFE—How a dog saved a boy's life, in color. Paramount.
- fj PUP'S PICNIC—Two pups get mixed up in a fox hunt. Clever satire in the use of various kinds of stock movie sound effects. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f PUPPET SHOW—Oswald the Lucky Rabbit puts on a show. Universal.
- fj THREE BLIND MOUSEKETEERS, THE (Silly Symphony)—How three blind mice escaped some very elaborate traps. United Artists.
- fj UNPOPULAR MECHANICS—Oswald becomes mechanical-minded. Universal.

### COMEDIES, MUSICALS, NOVELTIES AND SERIALS

- j ACE DIAMOND (Serial) NOS. 4-10—Continually exciting, about an international airways. Universal.
- f BACKYARD BROADCAST—Kids imitating the Bowes amateur show. Vitaphone.
- f CAMP MEETIN'—Fine singing by the Hall Johnson Choir. RKO-Radio.
- f EMIL COLEMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA—Good band and numbers. Vitaphone.
- f FOOL PROOF (Crime Does Not Pay Series)—Interesting picture about a perfect crime that turns out to be not so perfect. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f \*HOW TO VOTE—Very funny lecture in Robert Benchley's usual style. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj KILLER DOG—The trial of a dog accused of killing sheep. This film was used in the trial of Idaho—a real dog actually tried some little time ago. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f MUSICAL CHARMERS—Phil Spitalny and his girl orchestra. Paramount.
- f NO PLACE LIKE ROME—Miniature musical comedy—amusing farce combining old Roman days with modern times. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj PINK LEMONADE—Toto the Clown and the Cabin Kids. Educational.
- f RHYTHM OF THE RIVER—Negro singing. Paramount.
- fj SAILOR SHORTY—Amusing antics of a chimpanzee at sea. Paramount.
- f STRANGER THAN FICTION NOS. 27-29—Strange sights and people the world over. Universal.
- j VIGILANTES ARE COMING (Serial) NOS. 9-12—California is finally taken, by the Vigilantes. Republic.
- f VIOLETS IN THE SPRING—Miniature musical comedy elaborately done. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures is a citizen body, organized in 1909 by the People's Institute of New York City as a medium for reflecting intelligent public opinion regarding a growing art and entertainment. This is still the Board's function, together with that of disseminating information on the subject of motion pictures and carrying on a constructive program having to do with community cooperation in the advancement and uses of the motion picture.

The National Board is opposed to legal censorship and is in favor of the community, better films plan of placing emphasis upon and building support for the finer and more worthwhile films. It is at all times glad to cooperate with any agency to encourage and guide the motion picture in developing its possibilities both as recreation and as entertainment.

It carries on its work through various committees. All members of the committees serve without pay. No member is connected with the motion picture industry. They are representative of varied interests and activities and many are connected with large public welfare organizations or educational institutions.

The General Committee is a body evolved out of the original group organized in 1909. It is the appeal and central advisory committee of the National Board to which policies are referred and to which decisions of the Review Committee regarding pictures may be carried either by the producers or by the Review Committee itself.

The Executive Committee is composed of members of the General Committee and is the directing body of the National Board, charged with the formulation of policies, the election of members, the expenditure of funds and supervision of all administrative affairs.

The Review Committee is a large group of 300 members carrying on the work of reviewing the films. It is divided into sub-groups which meet for review per schedule during each week in the projection rooms of the various motion picture companies.

The Membership Committee supervises the membership list of the Review Committee and recommends the names of proposed new members for consideration by the Executive Committee.

The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays is composed of critics and students of the cinema interested particularly in encouraging the artistic development of the motion picture. It reviews and publishes a critique of the finest films and assists community groups in the showing of unusual films to special audiences. Its pioneer activity has done much to lay the foundation for the Little Photoplay Theatre movement and to stimulate the organization of subscription groups to develop audiences for the support of the creative achievements of the screen.

## NATIONAL MOTION PICTURE COUNCIL

The community or field work of the National Board of Review is conducted under its National Motion Picture Council, through affiliated membership groups, service contact groups and correspondents throughout the country. The National Council assists in the organization and program of work of local groups which are usually called Councils.

These Councils follow a plan initiated by the National Board in 1916 of having a membership composed of representatives from many organizations, cultural, educational, recreational, religious, and civic, so that they typify the original movement for community participation in the development and best use of the motion picture as recreation and education.

The objectives of such organizations are as follows:

To demonstrate through the education of public opinion, the effectiveness of selection and classification, instead of censorship, as a means of forwarding the development of the motion picture and its best uses.

To encourage through open meetings, forums, classes and other means, the study of the motion picture as a medium of entertainment, education and artistic expression.

To concentrate the attention of the public on specific worthwhile films through the publication of a Photoplay Guide to the selected pictures being currently shown at local theatres.

To arrange family Friday night or week-end programs of selected films, and junior matinees of pictures particularly suited to the tastes of children, through cooperation with local exhibitors.

To endorse and further the use of visual education through motion pictures in the schools.

To arrange and promote occasional exhibitions of exceptional and cultural films that would not normally be shown in the commercial theatres.

### PUBLICATIONS

The National Board of Review and its Council as an aid to the groups carrying out these objectives furnishes an informational service through its publications.

#### National Board of Review Magazine (monthly)

\$2.00 a year for individual subscriptions  
\$1.00 a year to Council or club groups

#### Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures

\$2.50 a year when taken alone, available at a special rate of \$1.00 in conjunction with the Magazine.

Selected Pictures Catalog (annual) .....25c

Special Film Lists .....10c ea.

Such as Selected Films for Children's Showings,  
Selected Book-Films, Educational Films, etc.

National Board of Review—Its Background,  
Growth and Present Status.....free

National Board of Review—How It Works.....free

A Plan and a Program for Community  
Motion Picture Councils .....10c



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# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE



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*Margo and Burgess Meredith in "Winterset" (see page 9)*

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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

- 
- f \*AS YOU LIKE IT—See Exceptional Photographs Department, page 11.
  - f \*BORN TO DANCE—Eleanor Powell, James Stewart, Una Merkel. Screenplay by Jack McGowan, Sid Silvers and B. G. DeSylva. Directed by Roy Del Ruth. A song-and-dance show, with songs by Cole Porter, done in handsome style. The plot, about a girl arriving at stardom on the stage, is not too original, but it is handled with a good deal of novelty. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
  - m \*COME AND GET IT—Edward Arnold, Frances Farmer. Novel by Edna Ferber. Directed by Howard Hawks. A drama of a man who gives up love for wealth and power. Finally rich and influential, he tries to recapture the lost romance only to see his son marry the girl he himself loves. Well cast and directed with thrilling scenes of lumbering in the Wisconsin forests. United Artists.
  - f FLYING HOSTESS—William Gargan, Judith Barrett. Screenplay by George Sayer. Directed by Murray Roth. A light and breezy story of registered nurses who become air hostesses. Some nice flying. Universal.
  - m \*GARDEN OF ALLAH—Marlene Dietrich, Charles Boyer. Novel by Robert Hichens. Directed by Richard Boleslawski. Hichens' story of the Trappist monk who broke his vows, left the monastery and married, and the remorse that overtook him. Done in Technicolor, and with a noticeable advance in the use of color photography on the screen. United Artists.
  - f LOVE ON THE RUN—Clark Gable, Joan Crawford, Franchot Tone. Cosmopolitan story by Alan Gill and Julius Brodie. Directed by W. S. Van Dyke. A swift and hilarious farce, in which two rival newspaper reporters, on the trail of a runaway-heiress story, get involved with some international spies. For anyone who doesn't expect to take it seriously it is full of laughs. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
  - f PENNIES FROM HEAVEN—Bing Crosby, Edith Fellowes, Madge Evans. Story "The Peacock Feather" by Katherine Moore. Directed by Norman McLeod. Light and amusing story. Released from prison a young man finds adventure and romance with a small girl and her grandfather. The little girl is excellent and Bing's singing pleasing. Columbia.
  - f PLOT THICKENS, THE—James Gleason, ZaSu Pitts. Screenplay by Stuart Palmer. Directed by Ben Holmes. Another of the Oscar Piper-Hildegarde Withers detective stories, a pretty good mystery with sustained interest and a fair amount of uncertainty as to the outcome. A good bit of comedy scattered throughout. RKO-Radio.
  - f POLO JOE—Joe E. Brown. Screenplay by Peter Milne and Hugh Cummings. Directed by William McGann. When a man gets hay fever at the sight of a horse and has to be a polo hero to win his girl, the result is an acrobatic farce for Joe E. Brown, which gets merrier as it goes along. Warner.
  - f REUNION—Dionne Quintuplets, Jean Hersholt, Rochelle Hudson. Screenplay by Bruce Gould. Directed by Norman Taurog. A reunion of a crowd of the 3000 babies the famous doctor brought into the world, where many tangled strands of individual lives are straightened out by him. A warm-hearted story and a good show, with a welcome sight of such old favorites as Tom Moore, Esther Ralston and Hank Mann, and actors who were in "The Country Doctor." 20th Century-Fox.
  - m \*THEODORA GOES WILD—Irene Dunne, Melvyn Douglas. Screenplay by Mary McCarthy. Directed by Richard Boleslawski. A delightful and amusing story of a girl brought up in a conventional town who writes a daring novel, then because of a man she kicks over the traces and tries to live up to her novel. Excellent acting, clever dialogue and good directing. Columbia.
  - f \*THREE MEN ON A HORSE—Frank McHugh, Joan Blondell. Play by John Cecil Holm and George Abbott. Directed by Mervyn LeRoy. A forty-dollar a week man who picks the winning horses for a pastime, finds

(Continued on page 15)



# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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## Joseph M. Price Rejoins National Board

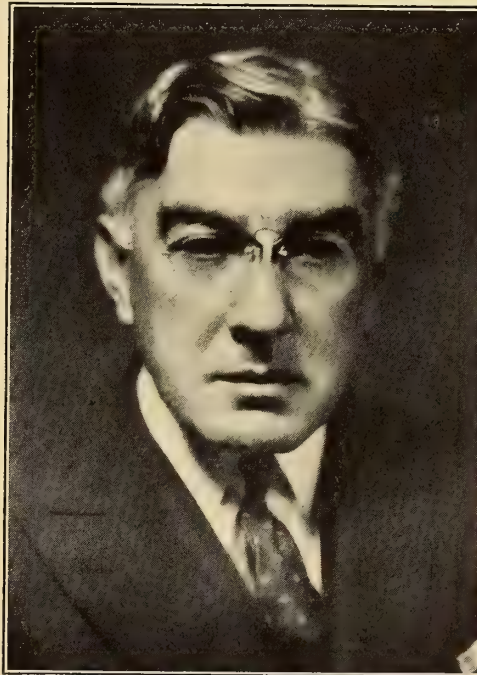
THE National Board of Review announces to the readers of the Magazine the election of Mr. Joseph M. Price to the Executive Committee. Associated in the affairs of the Board with its founders and leaders twenty or more years ago, Mr. Price was forced to retire from active participation in its work because of pressure of personal affairs. All during the time since then, however, he has retained his interest in, and kept in touch with, the activity of the organization. It is particularly gratifying to welcome back Mr. Price into the National Board as a member of its administrative committee, so renewing his active participation with the counsel and leadership he is equipped to give. It is a fine example of the interest in the Board maintained through the years by so many of those who were associated in its work in the early days. In accepting his election to the Executive Committee, Mr. Price states:

"I am glad not only to renew my old

relationship with the National Board of Review but happy to do so in an active way as a member of the Executive Committee. It seems to me that this organization, of all the groups and movements functioning, or that have sought to function,

in the field of the motion picture, is the one, over a long period of years, that has achieved and maintained constructive leadership.

"The motion picture, long since referred to as an infant among the forms of expression, has really grown into adulthood and is becoming ever more articulate. It is articulate today, however, not only because of the sound effects and registering of conversation on the screen through the ingenuity of scientific devices, but even more because of the potent social import it has assumed as



Mr. Joseph M. Price

a purveyor of ideas and as a creative and educational force.

"I appreciate the splendid influence the National Board has been in the development of intelligent thought concerning this me-

dium of the motion picture, and I appreciate its steadfast insistence that the films are a form of human expression worthy of the interest, study and support of serious people. Its effort to acquaint the country, through its community groups, of the best in motion pictures both as entertainment and as art, constitutes a lucid and workable program, which has had its effect on the favorable reception of intelligent films by the public and therefore tended toward the encouragement of their production. Its philosophy of selection and classification, rather than censorship, adopted in 1916, has established an equitable, democratic principle for the motion picture's social governance which has been accepted and followed by thoughtful people throughout the country.

"The Board's opposition to censorship, whether national, state, religious or in any

other form, is valid as being also an opposition to the infringement of the democratic ideal. Censorship of the films leads to suppression of a free press and free speech. Censorship has always been the weapon of autocracy, the oppressor of free opinion. The Board's opposition to this instrument has constituted a forefront of intelligent opinion on the subject."

Mr. Price is Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the City Club of New York and has been for years interested in civic affairs in New York City. He formed and was Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Citizens' Committee which elected Mayor Mitchel. His most recent activity in this same interest was as Chairman of the Independent Fusion Committee which took part in the nomination and election of Mayor LaGuardia.

## Inquiry into Research

*We ask Mr. Hendee of R. K. O.*

RESEARCH has its reward. A motion picture correct and authentic in every detail is a far finer picture. It offers more satisfying entertainment with a resultant pleased public and it brings forth fewer of those calling-to-account criticisms from the "boner-searchers." For this reason the motion picture companies maintain extensive Research Departments where all manner of questions can be answered and all sorts of matters verified.

These departments in their daily stride take calmly and answer correctly such queries as: size and shape of envelopes used for telegrams in the South in 1865; what would the cry of a baby dinosaur be like; a grain pit in the African desert; what circuses, if any, were travelling in the western part of the U. S. near Oklahoma in 1898—during September, October and November; color of Wild Bill Hickok's hair; is it permissible for a juror to question a witness in New York and New Jersey?

These research activities go rather unheralded, they are taken, if thought of at

all by the motion picture spectator, as a matter of course. But this is a behind the scenes activity which is interesting to the public when they give consideration to it. This was proven to us when we heard the response following the lecture by Mr. Harold Hendee, Director of the R. K. O. Research Department, at the New York University motion picture course conducted under the auspices of the National Board of Review and the School of Education of the University. We thought then that our readers too might be interested in hearing something of this search for authenticity which is conducted by Mr. Hendee and his staff in the making of pictures, and as R. K. O. is one company maintaining an eastern research office, we were able to ask Mr. Hendee at first hand many questions and to learn many interesting things from him.

He said, answering our first question, "The research department gets on the job the minute that a story which is to be made into a picture is purchased. Difficulties pre-



sent themselves right at the beginning. Authors may not be as careful in presenting their stories as the picture companies have to be when presenting these stories on the screen. The author's readers do not visualize his characters and his scenes down to the last detail. But as soon as that story is turned into celluloid and shown in theatres throughout the country, every scene, character and object is seen down to the smallest detail. And that smallest detail *must* be correct."

He illustrated this point by saying, an author may write "the General entered the room in full regalia," the reader can then visualize the General according to his own experience or his own imagination, maybe it is a General correct in every detail the reader sees, maybe it is just a composite of gold braided cloth and medals, but lo! when it comes to the motion picture translation of that General's entrance, he must be wearing exactly the uniform an officer of that nation and that rank would be wearing in the country pictured at the hour and at the occasion pictured. If not, what a storm of protest will be received from those who know the military dress regulations, and even if this may be a very small minority of the millions viewing the picture those few must not be given an opportunity to see and to report an error.

The public, Mr. Hendee says, has made such careful research necessary by showing an active interest in the authenticity of motion pictures. This public check-up, as it were, Mr. Hendee thinks is all for the good, for pictures should be accurate and the fact that the public is on watch, makes the companies on guard against anachronisms. The ABC of the Research Departments might be phrased as of "anachronisms be careful."

But it is no small matter to be always right in picture making, for what may be considered a reliable source of information may prove to be wrong. Mr. Hendee here again referred to what he has called a classic example from his experience. Several years ago he directed the research for *Janice Meredith*, at that time considered the most perfect example of authenticity which the movies had produced. One of the sequences

in this film depicted Washington crossing the Delaware, and the shots were patterned on the famous painting by Leutze, familiar to all. Prominent in the painting is the American flag, a stars and stripes. Upon investigation, it was discovered that the stars and stripes had not been created when Washington made the famous crossing. "In the film," he said, "we had the right flag, the one used at that time, but you should have seen the scores of letters received, telling us what dumbbells we were for using the wrong flag in the film when all we had to do was to copy the noted painting."

Also, says Mr. Hendee, "authorities, or so-called authorities, do not always agree, and one of the most confusing things to a beginner in the picture research field is to discover that the opinions of several experts are quite often widely at variance. So as a matter of verification, we never take the statement of one person about a matter in question, we always try to have at least six opinions on the subject. If four opinions out of the six manage to agree, we feel that the majority opinion is fairly safe to follow." If of the several sources consulted there is a difference of opinion the most picturesque description or background is chosen, as it lends more color and atmosphere to the film. Again referring to *Janice Meredith*, Mr. Hendee said, "We were asked to ascertain in what kind of weather a certain Revolutionary battle was fought. We turned to the historians and discovered that while some authorities claimed the battle had been fought during a day of brilliant sunshine, others held out for a raging snowstorm. We finally had the movie battle take place in the snow, not only because it was more picturesque but because the preponderance of evidence favored the storm."

One of the things Mr. Hendee emphasized was that entertainment must not be overlooked or forgotten in the stress on authenticity, for after all a motion picture is made to entertain, not to be a work of research; it must in a measure, if necessary, combine fancy with fact, at least enough to insure entertainment. A degree of cinematic license should be allowed upon occasion. Mr.

Hendee told of one phase of picture fashioning where at least a moderation of the truth is necessary and that is in picturing women's clothes of a decade or so ago, if the short skirt of that period were used in a picture the audience would certainly laugh at the heroine whatever reaction her character in the story demanded. Therefore, he said, a suggestion of the mode is used rather than the real exaggeration. And if we may add a further fashion note here, Mr. Hendee said, in a few years from now we will not be able to show without drawing a laugh most of the women's hats of today.

But to come back to now, the public is likely to think of authentication, said Mr. Hendee, only in relation to so-called "costume" pictures, those of the distant or near past, but almost as much research is spent on films with a modern background. For a picture of life in an Illinois hamlet, the appearance of houses, stores, hotels, banks and everything is checked, since the background must look like an Illinois small town and no other place. Also for farm pictures all details of the particular region represented must be exact, a Maine farm is not like an Illinois farm, perhaps the urban dweller does not know this but the rural dweller will well know if the farm in the middle west is used as the setting for a "down east" picture and tell the producer he knows naught of farm life.

The method of authenticating, according to Mr. Hendee, is always the same. "We read the original story and make copious notes of everything in the story that may be necessary when the film goes into production: costumes, props, settings, both interior and exterior, and also dialogue. This last subject sometimes offers a very interesting problem, that of slang. You will find slang appearing in stories of all periods, and checking on its authenticity reveals the most amazing facts. Some slang, popular in use two decades ago, is so fresh that you can hardly believe it is so old. Localized slang, if such a term may be used, also offers quite a problem: we must always be on our guard to make sure that an expression of speech, current only in the deep South, does

not creep into a picture where the characters are all Maine Yankees. Slang for pictures of the World War, of the eighteen nineties, of the middle west of a decade ago—a study of these off-shoots of the English language is all a part of our work." So we see the sound films with more dialogue have added to the need for research.

The notes made on the stories, often run into hundreds upon hundreds of items, and each item must be carefully checked, according to Mr. Hendee, photographs of all the costumes, settings and props mentioned must be secured, as well as written material to augment and explain the pictures. Naturally, these searches for pictures and other material are often extremely involved. Research in the movies, in fact, is often akin, he says, to detective work.

And to prove this let us consider some more of the questions which have come to this R. K. O. Research staff and the trails they must have followed to find all the required facts and figures: what was a straight jacket like in 1860?; what was a Dutch drum of the 17th Century like?; what type of drinking vessels were in use at the Springs at Vichy in 1860, and what was the uniform of the waiters like?; what type of wagon was used by a Vermont tin-peddler in the 1840's?; would a presentee at the Court Presentation at Buckingham Palace be allowed to wear black?; when did spectacles first come into use?; when did the custom of half-masting the flag first originate?

A bright young lady said to us not long ago, "I don't remember a thing from school, all my education I get from the movies." Well perhaps the movies can be depended upon to tell us a good many things of fact and custom while they entertain us. B. G.

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THE twenty-second annual gathering of the National Board of Review will be held in New York City the first week in February at the Hotel Pennsylvania. Each year there is increased interest in these Conferences among the Board's members and friends nearby and afar. We invite all to note the date and to plan to come.



# Discussions on the Movies

*The Second of a Series to Suggest How Groups and Clubs May Investigate Some of the Aspects of the Motion Picture*

By JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

## NOVELS AND PLAYS ON THE SCREEN

IN the early nickelodeon days, when the movies first began to tell stories, a very slight plot was enough to satisfy audiences to whom the mere sight of pictures in motion was a sufficient miracle to hold their interest and arouse their wonder. Trite little tales that lasted only a few minutes served perfectly well. But when the novelty of the new machine passed, what the machine provided had to be improved, and the long and apparently endless business began of going to books for screen stories. Classics and popular novels appeared in movies of two, three or four reels; later on, with the development of technical skill in production and higher demands from audiences, the same stories were elaborated into longer films that reproduced more of the substance of the originals; in the last ten years we have had them still again, with sound and speech; if color films become widely prevalent they are due for yet another screen incarnation. For a story already written and needing only to be adapted is a god-send to the movie producer.

Films made from novels are in a class by themselves. They are made, often, because the novel has been popular and there is therefore a potential audience waiting for it. Because of this audience, eager to see what it has already read, the canny producer sticks as closely as he can to the original so that people, looking for their mental images to materialize on the screen, will not be disappointed. When they succeed their rewards are great. Look at *David Copperfield* and *Little Women*!

So we do not seek much in the ordinary movie-from-a-novel except fidelity to its original, and what we usually get is an animated picture book with speech—and when it is satisfying, well and good.

There are cases, however, when the movie improves on the novel, making vividly real

with its pictures and sound-track what the novel could only describe. Probably not many people have read *The Informer*, even if they knew that it was originally a novel. Those who did, while they regretted some of the changes made in the characterizations of the women of the story (none of O'Flaherty's women were likeable or admirable, but they were authentic and unromanticized), must admit that there was an atmosphere in the film, and an intensity of emotion, that the printed word could never create so effectively. The same thing happens, on another level, with adventure stories. Physical action is always more exciting to watch than to read about.

It might be asserted, and a lot of instances invoked to prove it, that the poorer a novel is as literature, provided it has an interesting plot, the better movie it makes—and conversely, that the higher a novel ranks as literature, the harder, even to becoming nearly impossible, it becomes to make a good movie of it. Not so long ago as to have been completely forgotten are *Becky Sharp*, *Anna Karenina*, and *Crime and Punishment*. Did any one of them contain any of the things that made the novels great, or threaten in any part to supplant the novels in the memory of those who had read them? Yet many an ephemeral magazine story stays with us as something pleasant to recall when it is mentioned as *It Happened One Night*, perhaps, or *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*.

*Anthony Adverse* has been the outstanding novel-movie in the last few months. Its attraction for audiences may be fairly credited to the vast vogue of the book, and curiosity to find out how much of the book managed to get to the screen. How many people who had read the book were satisfied? How would they have had it different? It was a very long book and a great deal had to be left out of the movie, some things

for reasons of length, some for other reasons. But *Les Miserables* was an even longer book, made into a shorter film. Was it any more satisfying as a film? Did having an underlying theme make any vital difference?

*Come and Get It* is a good film to compare with Edna Ferber's novel. Where does the film surpass the novel (if it does) in interest, in appeal to the emotions? Are the characters so vivid on the screen, or the atmosphere, or the action?

Three other novels that have been widely read, and widely liked because of individual qualities in both their subject-matter and style, are coming along pretty soon—*Gone With the Wind* in the farther future, *The Good Earth* and *The Lost Horizon* almost immediately. Will they stand on their own as films without help from memory of the books, and keep the essential qualities that distinguished the books? *The Good Earth* has been a long time in the making, and there was a long doubt about whether it should be made with a Chinese cast or not. Will non-Chinese actors hurt it as a picture of Chinese life and character? The book, of course, was not really Chinese—it was China seen through American eyes. Being thus one remove from the real thing—the real thing in the sense of being a product of the Chinese mind and temperament—will it matter essentially that the actors are not Chinese? They will seem foreign at any rate—Paul Muni because he is so good a character impersonator, Luise Rainer and Tilly Losch because they cannot help it, whatever their histrionic gifts. Will seeming foreign make them seem sufficiently Chinese? And incidentally the film should indicate something about the wisdom of trying to depict a foreign people in their own setting as compared with putting Americans in that same foreign setting, as in *Oil for the Lamps of China* and *The General Died at Dawn*.

*The Lost Horizon* can also be included in the Chinese cycle in a general way, though its Chinese background is imaginative and idealized instead of realistic. But the interesting thing about that film will be discovering what Frank Capra will have done

with a story whose main outlines of plot might have been written by Rider Haggard. Capra has shown an extraordinary gift for taking unimportant little tales of only magazine caliber and making them into lively, delightful films—*It Happened One Night*, *Broadway Bill*, and *Mr. Deeds*. *The Lost Horizon* is in a quite different class as a novel, and the distinguishing thing about it is not the plot but the ideas that motivate the characters and determine the plot. Will the film be just an adventure story, or will the deeper springs of the action come across on the screen?

Most novels are more narrative than dramatic, however much the narrative builds up to something approaching a dramatic climax. A film that remains faithful to its novel original can remain mainly narrative and still be satisfying. Plays come much closer to the form in which films are generally most effective. And again the principal consideration in judging a film as a film when it is derived from a play is whether it is as effective on the screen as it was on the stage.

Two very good films made from plays in the last year were *Ceiling Zero* and *The Petrified Forest*. The strongest objection that some critics made to them was that they were more photographed plays than true movies. Was that true? The answer is to be found in a direct comparison of the play, as staged, with the film. Did the film have something the acted play did not have? Was the dramatic kick increased or lessened on the screen? Was the film spoiled by having seen the play? And if one had not seen the play did the film seem cramped, confined in its sweep and action as if it had been written for a more circumscribed field than the camera is expected to cover? The same questions can be raised with *Winterset*, and in that film they are even more obvious. There it is quite apparent that the element of chance has been considerably strained to bring all the people together in one place for their dramatic conflict. How much does that hurt the film?

The time has come when Shakespeare can be adequately put on the screen, and this

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# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS

## DEPARTMENT

*This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of Exceptional and Honorable*

*Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.*

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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## Winterset

*Adapted by Anthony Veiller, from a play by Maxwell Anderson; directed by Alfred Santell; photographed by Peverell Marley; art directors, Van Nest Polglase and Perry Ferguson; musical director, Rob Webb. Produced by Pandro S. Berman; released and distributed by RKO Radio Pictures.*

### The cast

Mio .....	Burgess Meredith
Miriamne .....	Margo
Trock .....	Eduardo Ciannelli
Judge Gaunt .....	Edward Ellis
Garth .....	Paul Guilfoyle
Esdras .....	Maurice Moscovitch
Shadow .....	Stanley Ridges
Policeman .....	Willard Robertson
Radical .....	Mischa Auer
Romagna .....	John Carradine
Mrs. Romagna .....	Helen Jerome Eddy
Carr .....	Myron McCormick
Girl .....	Barbara Pepper
Hobo .....	Alec Craig
Piny .....	Fernanda Eliscu
Louie .....	Murray Alper
Joe .....	Paul Fix
Lucia .....	George Humbert

THIS picture has the importance that comes from dealing sincerely and movingly with one of the great human themes— injustice. Its plot has a basis in a case similar to the Saccho and Vanzetti case, where a man known as a radical and accused of killing a paymaster is executed for the crime of murder on evidence that with the passing of time comes to seem more and more inadequate until eventually the belief is deep and widespread that a tragic miscarriage of justice had occurred. The story centers in the executed man's son, who has grown up under the stigma of being the son of a murderer. Encouraged by published statements from an eminent jurist that the law had mishandled his father's

case, he sets out to vindicate his father's memory. His whole hope hinges on finding a man who had been a witness of the crime.

Upon the hiding-place of this witness converge all the people whose lives have become entangled in the aftermath of Romagna's execution: his son, Mio, bitter and vengeful and yet, like a minor Hamlet, with other dreams in him that make him sometimes forget the purpose of his search; the judge who condemned Romagna, his mind unhinged by brooding over whether he was a just judge or not; the actual murderer, fearful lest the witness finally speak out the truth. One doesn't stop to wonder how so many people happened to be so conveniently in one spot for the carrying on of the drama because the drama, and the people, are absorbingly interesting.

Young Mio finds his witness in the brother of a girl he has begun to love, and this love makes him want to forget to hate. But it is hatred and fear that have driven all these people to the dark hiding-place of Garth Esdras, and hold them there till all their fears and passions have worked themselves out in violence. Mio and the girl Miriamne escape, to unite their lives, one supposes, in a future which is to be at least free from pursuing vengeance.

This film is unusually difficult to judge without reference to the play from which it was made. One wishes Maxwell Anderson had taken the material of his play, thrown away the whole scheme of construction he had used for the stage, and recreated it himself in the medium of a motion picture. With all the scenarios he has written he should know how. But instead An-

thony Veiller has written the screenplay, skillfully and sympathetically, but obviously hampered by his respect for the original and his desire to keep as much of it as he could, and by the presumably commercial necessity of contriving an ending which would leave motion picture audiences less depressed than they might be expected to be by the hopeless tragedy of Anderson's climax. In many ways he has written a movie that is more effective than the play. It is more direct, the people and their motives are more understandable, and it is far less cluttered up with fancy thinking and writing. Clearly what faults must be found with it come from the play.

Mr. Anderson apparently — and most laudably—aspires to make poetical tragedy live again on the stage, to be a present-day Sophocles and Shakespeare. *Mary of Scotland* was a venture toward that goal, and a fairly safe one, involving none of the problems that beset him when he took another step forward in *Winterset* and tried to treat modern social problems in the manner of the grand old tragic poets. The greatest problem in such an attempt is to find a modern American idiom not only for poetry but for tragedy. If that is not found the play is not a vital expression of its times, no matter how much blank verse is employed or how many characters are killed off in the end.

Mr. Anderson as a poet calls to mind Bernard Shaw's flippant but plausible proclamation to the effect that it is easier to write blank verse good enough to impress those who are impressed by anything that reminds them, however superficially, of Shakespeare—much easier—than to write the dialogue of true human speech. Just what writer of today could rise above the mere mechanics of rhythm and "fine" writing into the lift and intensification of living poetry, and put speeches into the mouths of ordinary men and women which would express characteristic thoughts and feelings and yet burn and enlighten with genuine poetic fire, it is impossible to say. Certainly not Mr. Anderson, for any consistent length. But his problems as a poet do not concern this film, which has simply discarded all the long

speeches and most of the blank verse. Some will note this discard with regret, others with relief.

But there is still the problem of tragedy, and many will think the happy ending of the film destroys the effect of Mr. Anderson's tragic intentions. It isn't necessary to go into lengthy speculations about katharsis and whether the modern spirit can be purged through pity and terror by the same means that served with Aristotle's Athenians. But what was it that Mr. Anderson intended his tragedy to be? A tragedy of the injustice of the law? Hardly, for Romagna's legal murder because he was a socialist was merely prologue. Was it the tragedy of the injustice of life itself? A boy, haunted by the memory of an innocent father killed for the guilt of others, sets out to find those guilty others, and finds them—and finds, too, a love that sets him free of his haunting memories, and in the end is shot by the discovered gangsters. Is that tragedy, in the heroic sense that the word implies, or is it just good melodrama?

Maybe just good melodrama, where it does not matter greatly that the film allows the boy and girl to escape being shot for the sake of a nominal happy ending. How actually happy it was can be imagined—for what happiness had those two pitiful creatures to look forward to, except to be able to cling together in what lay ahead of them?

If a happy ending was what made it possible to put *Winterset* on the screen, it was justified, for the things in it that make it stand out above the ordinary movie do not hinge on whether Mio escaped life or escaped death. The best thing Maxwell Anderson did in his play was to create a set of firm, clear characters whose impact on one another was dramatic and full of meaning, in situations eloquent either vocally or implicitly with vigorous criticism of social injustice. Life is the villain of the piece, for all its gangsters—the kind of life that breeds such violence and wretchedness. From the condemned father and his unhappy judge, down through the bewildered young people and terrified, desperate gangsters to the shivering beggar and the blus-



tering befuddled cop, these people cry out powerfully against the things that make them what they are. The film puts them across with splendid vividness and honesty, helped immensely by the touching performances of Burgess Meredith and Margo and a long list of actors who every one contribute

some individual excellence, that helps build up the excellent whole. For the worth of the picture lies in these people—the combined creations of writer and actors—who stir you, often profoundly, beyond the custom of the movies, about things that really matter.—J. S. H.

## As You Like It

*The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays was so definitely divided in its opinions on "As You Like It" that two reviews of the film have been written, one by Mrs. Patterson upholding one point of view and one by Mr. Hamilton upholding the other.*

### Liking It

OF the three plays of Shakespeare that the cinema has thus far produced—for I think we may discount entirely any attempts to put Shakespeare on the screen in the days when the screen was purely a pictorial medium and had no ability to reproduce dialogue—the production of *As You Like It* seems to me to come closest to the Elizabethan idea that the play is the thing.

In *Romeo and Juliet* the production was starred. The lavish backgrounds had a tendency to overshadow the lines, to lend the play a pageantry that was more Metro-Goldwyn's than its own. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the producer was starred. In *As You Like It* the actress is starred. The picture is Miss Bergner's, as *Romeo and Juliet* was not Norma Shearer's and Leslie Howard's; competent though their acting was, they were merely parts of a whole which was greater than its parts. And certainly the picture is Miss Bergner's as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was not Dick Powell's and Mickey Rooney's.

If we are to have Shakespeare's plays on the screen at all, we should have them as dramatic literature, that is simply to say we should have them the way they are. There is no point in trying to translate the beauty of words into the beauty of pictures. When that is done the result is something else, very lovely and gratifying, no doubt, but

(Continued on next page)

### Not Liking It

THE making of this film must have been a labor of love, for no hard-headed movie producer could have thought it would have any great appeal either to film fans who want nothing but to be entertained or to specialists in the cinematic art. Quite probably it had some of its origin in the expectation that there was going to be a cycle of Shakespearean films—a lot of announcements some time ago made such a cycle seem imminent—and in the fact that Elizabeth Bergner, emerging with some success on the English-speaking screen, had had a prodigiously long stage run as Rosalind in Germany and wanted to repeat a part she was very fond of. Anyway, here it is, done with the best of intentions and with very little to attract the money of the masses or the applause of the kinomanes.

The play is certainly, in its story, the silliest of Shakespeare's works that get revived. Its revivals, except for special, want-to-be-educated audiences, usually depend on some actress' ambition to show her graces in the garb of Rosalind. What Shakespeare himself thought of it can be guessed from its title—something he threw together to meet a popular demand, that strange fashion in contemporary English taste that made Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* a best seller, along with countless forgotten imitations, including a romance of Thomas Lodge's call-

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still not Shakespeare, the glory of which lies, not in camera effects, but in thought superlatively clothed in the written or spoken line. The minute such pictorial translation is made, as it was made in portions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the difference between the 16th Century drama medium and the 20th Century cinema medium makes itself felt. One is pulled up sharply and made to look when one would prefer only to listen. The constant beauty of Shakespeare's lines takes listening.

The production of *As You Like It* places the emphasis where it belongs—on the text. It brings home the point that the play was written to be acted. *Romeo and Juliet* had splendor. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* had ornamentation, with perhaps a little of the architectural flavor of Potsdam. *As You Like It* has personality.

To the part of Rosalind Miss Bergner brings joy and vivacity and grace. Her Rosalind is Shakespeare's Rosalind who allows her heart, a bit absurdly, to run away with itself, but who keeps her wit at home in her head. Her character is independent of geography. She is not so much an English lady in love as any lady in love. She is youth in love. And youth and love being without nationality, the slightly Teutonic accent which is part of Miss Bergner's charm readily becomes part of Rosalind's, so thoroughly does she identify herself with the role.

It is said that Miss Bergner was willing enough to wear some of the lovely costumes that had been designed for her screen performance but that she insisted on wearing in the forest scenes the little leather jerkin which she had worn during her hundreds of appearances on the Berlin stage. It might be added that she wears the part as she wears the jacket, with an air of ease and custom and affection, yet with no lack of spontaneity.

For me, at least, *As You Like It* successfully creates the "illusion of the first time," a difficult feat for any production and most difficult for a "classic." Wasn't it Lorelei in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* who was so disappointed when she came to read Shakespeare to find that the plays were made up

principally of quotations? And yet in *As You Like It* some of the lyrics and even such familiar lines as the "seven ages" speech seem to fall from the lips of the characters as if they were at that instant being thought and uttered by the speaker. Jacques, Orlando, Touchstone, the banished duke do not declaim as they so easily might. They speak their poetry naturally, and we are entirely willing to accept poetry as the language of a people who inhabit so curious a place as the Forest of Arden in which also dwell such seeming incompatibles as a cow, a lioness, a serpent, and a plethora of sheep. All the animals, especially the sheep, were rather badly handled, but so were the sheep in *Romeo and Juliet*. The noble young Montague, having sought them out, seemed bent on keeping to himself. Only *Pasteur* did well by his appealing woolly friends. (There's a subject for a dissertation: "Sheep on the Screen.")

But in *As You Like It* the animals and the "props" and the settings can be as fantastic as they please. The vital quality is in the text which created a highly satisfactory imaginary Forest of Arden out of the bare boards of the old Globe Theatre. Bowing to later stage and screen convention, the film has, of course, its sets, but, like the text, they are exact neither in time nor space. They were designed by the young Frenchman Lazare Meerson who proved in *La Kermesse Heroique* that, if he wanted to, he could make his settings real. He conjured up early 17th Century Flanders when he wanted to conjure up early 17th Century Flanders. The assumption, then, is that, if the Forest of Arden has a certain *papier mache* quality, it is because he did not want it otherwise; once more he was making his settings match his text. Comedy leaning toward fantasy does not need a sturdy backing. A too solid place would have given the film a Victor Jorishness—fairy form gone a bit to girth around the waist.

The music, like the settings, is in keeping with the play, but it goes beyond mere appropriateness. It is no musical pot-pourri of dog's eared compositions, so common in films. It is an original and imaginative score composed by William Walton and



brilliantly played by members of the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Mr. Walton aids Miss Bergner in sustaining the lyric note so definitely sounded at the beginning of the whole business of Master Shakespeare.

F. T. P.

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ed *Rosalynde*, from which Shakespeare calmly took a good deal of his plot, throwing in a wrestling match and several songs for good measure. He took the plot, but he did not take the trouble to fit it together with any convincing motivation of character or logic of incident. He merely—and inevitably—filled it with poetry, and a certain amount of that sunniness which English pastoral scenes and people so often awakened in him. The villainies that sent all the likeable characters into the forest of Arden were all stock villainies, no more credible than the remarkable conversions that turned the villains into the paths of virtue and repentance before the final curtain. The love story is unfolded in that special Elizabethan style of elegant verbosity, all according to fashionable rules, which smothered genuine feeling instead of releasing it, and involves, as every schoolboy knows, that most idiotic of situations wherein a young man tremendously in love fails to recognize his loved one the minute she abandons petticoats and takes to a pair of tights. The whole charm of the play is in its words and the atmosphere they create, and what is a good movie-maker going to do with that for a modern audience?

He might try to put some plausibility into the things the characters do, and make them interesting. But that would be a hard job—one that Shakespeare himself seems to have thought not worth bothering with—and risk bringing hisses from the purists by adding things the Bard did not write. Or he might try to find the visual music of Shakespeare's lines, or to reveal the Arden forest of the poet's dream by some miraculous turning on of the light that never was on sea or land—but where is the magic shadow-maker who can do that? The Bergner screen-play attempts neither of these difficult tasks but sticks faithfully and re-

spectfully to what is usually done on the stage, and by this restraint misses interest of story as well as the glamor of poetry.

It is a rather handsome production, with a very good farmyard and a most imposing residence for the usurping Duke. But the forest of Arden somehow lacks pastoral charm in spite of occasional glimpses of sheep and other animals—some of them, like a serpent and a lion, very odd to behold in England. It is, in fact, a painted forest, and the banished Duke and his retinue are just as theatrical, in costumes and manner, as if they were marching out on a stage back of a fine row of footlights. Without the spirit of under the greenwood tree, what remains of *As You Like It*?

The players are much better than their background, and Laurence Olivier the best, because he is most credibly what he was meant to be. He seems alive, with real feelings, and he even contrives in some subtle way to imply that he wasn't fooled at all by Rosalind's pretty disguise and only kept up his end of the game to please her. Leon Quartermaine and Henry Ainley, as the Jacques of melancholy renown and the Duke, sit and deliver their famous speeches about the uses of adversity and sermons in stones and the Seven Ages of Man with all the skill of experienced stage actors—and apparently no suspicion that they are not still on a stage. But most of the men are left with so little to do that they show very little of themselves, and Touchstone—the real Touchstone—is totally lost. Most of the women—Celia and Audrey and Phoebe—are pretty, and pretty soubrettish.

Elizabeth Bergner is a different matter. She has vitality, and a very apparent pleasure in playing Rosalind. Her heavy German accent—though it is not always heavy: she seems to have but an erratic control over it—raises the deuce with some of the poetry she has to utter, but a good deal of the April loveliness of Rosalind comes through in her performance, though she has chosen to elaborate it with many of the cute little wiggles that were much more at home in *Escape Me Never*. But where do actresses trying to impersonate boys get the idea they are doing it successfully by strutting

when they walk and stancing with feet wide apart when standing still? Another stage tradition, from Bernhardt down through Maude Adams to Eva Le Gallienne.

Finding such lengthy fault with this film would be uncalled for if so many people weren't going to hail it as worthy and beautiful, in the name of Shakespeare, and call it a good movie. It isn't good Shakespeare, and instead of being a good movie it isn't a movie at all. And some protest must be made because, from its poor adaptation of a play that was a poor choice to begin with, it may help spread the false idea that Shakespeare isn't worth doing on the screen.

J. S. H.

*Treatment of the play by William Shakespeare suggested by Sir James M. Barrie. Directed by Dr. Paul Czinner. Scenario by R. J. Cullen. Music by William Walton. Sets designed by Lazare Meerson. Costumes by John Armstrong and Joe Strassner. Photographed by Hall Rosson and Jack Cardiff. Produced by Inter-Allied Productions of London and distributed by Twentieth Century-Fox.*

#### Cast

Rosalind .....	Elizabeth Bergner
Orlando .....	Laurence Olivier
Exiled Duke .....	Henry Ainley
Duke Frederick .....	Felix Aylmer
Amiens .....	Stuart Robertson
Jacques .....	Leon Quartermaine
Le Beau .....	Austin Trevor
Charles .....	Lionel Braham
Oliver .....	John Laurie
Adam .....	J. Fisher White
Corin .....	Aubrey Mather
Touchstone .....	Mackenzie Ward
Sylvius .....	Richard Ainley
William .....	Peter Bull
Celia .....	Sophie Stewart
Phoebe .....	Joan White
Audrey .....	Dorice Fordred

## The Song of China

THE *Song of China* is the first authentic Chinese film to be shown anywhere in New York north of Pell Street. In its original Chinese it was a talkie, doubtless reels longer; the current version is silent, arrayed with English subtitles as decorative as arabesques.

Unlike the routine Chinese film intended for compatriots only, *The Song of China* has no dialectic interludes, and its technique is closer to Hollywood than it is to the ancient Chinese theatre. Its tempo, however, is pure Cantonese, and it gives you the conflict of the generations without hysteria, gang war, or unemployment; with a chaste, unruffled lyricism as alien to the dynamics of the West as its arcadian landscapes.

To a film public generated on Westerns and the split-second rescue, *The Song of China* is merely "quaint." It is an unpretentious little film extolling the ways of the ancestors, with a quiet dignity and extraordinary pictorial beauty. Yet the special value of the film is not alone its strange *mise-en-scene*, its document of manners, or even its array of visual portraits, but the underlying air of beauty and simplicity that they have all given it, director, camera man and actors. It is this suggestion of parable more than anything else that sets it apart from the rivers of suavity that flow from Hollywood.

E. G.

(Continued from page 8)

year we have *Romeo and Juliet* and *As You Like It*, in addition to last year's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, to show how much the screen's potentialities have been used, still keeping faith with Shakespeare. Leaving aside the question of actors and how nearly they realized the Shakespearean characters (that is a question not peculiar to the films but one that enters equally in a stage presentation of the plays), how do these productions compare as a re-creation of the plays in the medium of the motion

picture? Do they hang together better as films than they do as plays? Have they lost or gained in their transference to the screen? If they have both gained and lost, does the gain compensate for the loss? On the whole which would one rather see, granted for argument's sake that each was produced as well as the other—the film or the play?

Other plays have reached the screen in productions a great many people have liked. *Rose Marie* is one type—vastly different



from the stage version, just as *Naughty Marietta* was. Does this kind of musical romance gain anything from being done before a motion picture camera? *The Green Pastures* followed its original very faithfully, even to its theatrical settings. Did that make it seem any less a good movie? Did the essential spirit of it come across as well on the screen, or any better? *These Three*, for obvious reasons, had to depart radically from some of the fundamental elements of *The Children's Hour*. Did that hurt it as a film, or did it make it something so different that there is not much point in comparing them? Did *Mary of Scotland* by throwing away the literary style of Maxwell Anderson's play improve or harm itself as a film? Did Mae West add to *Personal Appearance* or subtract from it when she altered it into *Go West Young Man*?

All such questions are interesting to dispute over in connection with films that are derived from novels and plays. In the more unusual instances of a film that is superior in itself it makes little difference where it was derived from. Essentially, if one is mainly interested in films, the important point is how good a film is as a film, without reference to what it may have been between book covers or on the stage.

*The next one of this series will take up stories written directly for the screen.*

## Selected Pictures Guide

(Continued from page 2)

himself picking winners for three gamblers. Highly amusing story, well produced and with clever dialogue. The supporting cast does much for the picture also. First National.

- f WHITE HUNTER—Warner Baxter, June Lang, Gail Patrick. Screenplay by Gene Markey. Directed by Irving Cummings. On a hunting safari in the heart of Africa a man who has been hounded out of England has a chance to get back at the man who wronged him. A brooding intensity to the story that is effective, and some splendid atmosphere of the African wilds. 20th Century-Fox.

m \*WINTERSET—See Exceptional Photoplays Department, page 9.

## Foreign Language Films

- f CAPELLO A TRE PUNTI, IL (The Three-Cornered Hat)—Leda Gloria, Peppino de Filippo, Eduardo de Filippo. Play by Antonio de Alarcon. Supervised by Mario Camerini. A delightful picturing of the classic tale of the miller and his wife and the governor whose flirtatiousness got him into farcical trouble. A spirited production, in the true Latin spirit. All in Italian. Nuovo Mondo.
- f FIAT VOLUNTAS DEI (God's Will Be Done)—Angelo Musco. Comedy by A. Macri. A picture of Sicilian country life, simple and truthful in its depiction of the people. Well produced and acted. All in Italian. Nuovo Mondo.

## SHORT SUBJECTS

### INFORMATIONALS

- fj CHIMP CHAMPS (Sportlight)—Why chimps are the best animal athletes. Paramount.
- fj DARE DEVILTRY—Circus performers in thrilling acts. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f "HOLLYWOOD EXTRA"—Life of an extra in Hollywood—true in its essentials and interesting. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj \*MARCH OF TIME NO. 3 (Series No. 3)—Covering, in its usual excellent fashion, modern ways of school teaching and the four years of President Roosevelt's first administration. RKO-Radio.
- f PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 4—Machine for mining gold; fur styles; aquaplaning. Paramount.
- f SKIING IS BELIEVING—Skiing! Columbia.
- f SPORTING QUIZ, THE (Sportlight)—Ted Husing keeps you guessing. Paramount.
- fj \*SPORTS HEADLINERS OF 1936—Extraordinary well-made compilation of athletic events, most of them in the recent Olympic Games. Thrilling to watch and a camera triumph. 20th Century-Fox.
- f SYMPHONY IN SNOW—Some very lovely snow scenes. Educational.
- f THAT'S THEIR BUSINESS—Strange ways people have of making a living. Paramount.
- f WESTERN SKETCHES—Robert Bruce Technicolor scenic of the Grand Canyon. Very beautiful. Paramount.
- f YOU CAN'T GET AWAY WITH IT—Behind the scenes with the G-Men, showing the workings of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Excellent instruction. Suggested for schools and libraries. Worth being kept permanently available. Universal.

### CARTOONS

- fj BE HUMAN (Betty Boop)—Betty and Grampy punish a man who is cruel to animals. Good for "Be Kind to Animals" Week. Paramount.
- fj COUNTRY COUSIN, THE (Mickey Mouse)—What happened to a country mouse on a wild night in the big bad city. Highly amusing. United Artists.
- fj MOTHER PLUTO (Silly Symphony)—Pluto, the dog, mothers a brood of baby chickens. United Artists.
- fj ROBIN HOOD IN AN ARROW ESCAPE—Amusing. Educational.
- fj SPINACH ROADSTER (Popeye)—The sailorman uses spinach in his car as well as himself to rescue Olive Oil. Paramount.
- fj TALKING THROUGH MY HEART (Bouncing Ball)—Title song and a gadget inventor.
- fj \*TO SPRING—A delightful cartoon in color. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f TOY TOWN-HALL (Merrie Melody)—Amusing take-offs on radio stars—in color. Vitaphone.
- fj TWO LAZY CROWS (Color Rhapsody)—Two crows try to get a ride South when winter comes but get left behind. Columbia.

### COMEDIES, MUSICALS, NOVELTIES, SERIALS AND SKITS

- j ACE DRUMMOND NOS. 11-12 (Serial)—Universal.
- f HOW TO BE A DETECTIVE—Robert Benchley in a slightly goofier mood than usual. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f SCREEN SNAPSHOTS NOS. 1-2—Hollywood stars at work and play. Columbia.
- f STAR REPORTER OF HOLLYWOOD, THE—Paramount.
- fj TWO TOO YOUNG—Spanky and Alfalfa come to grief trying to steal firecrackers from Buckwheat and Porky. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures is a citizen body, organized in 1909 by the People's Institute of New York City as a medium for reflecting intelligent public opinion regarding a growing art and entertainment. This is still the Board's function, together with that of disseminating information on the subject of motion pictures and carrying on a constructive program having to do with community cooperation in the advancement and uses of the motion picture.

The National Board is opposed to legal censorship and is in favor of the community better films plan of placing emphasis upon and building support for the finer and more worthwhile films. It is at all times glad to cooperate with any agency to encourage and guide the motion picture in developing its possibilities both as recreation and as entertainment.

It carries on its work through various committees. All members of the committees serve without pay. No member is connected with the motion picture industry. They are representative of varied interests and activities and many are connected with large public welfare organizations or educational institutions.

The General Committee is a body evolved out of the original group organized in 1909. It is the appeal and central advisory committee of the National Board to which policies are referred and to which decisions of the Review Committee regarding pictures may be carried either by the producers or by the Review Committee itself.

The Executive Committee is composed of members of the General Committee and is the directing body of the National Board, charged with the formulation of policies, the election of members, the expenditure of funds and supervision of all administrative affairs.

The Review Committee is a large group of 300 members carrying on the work of reviewing the films. It is divided into sub-groups which meet for review per schedule during each week in the projection rooms of the various motion picture companies.

The Membership Committee supervises the membership list of the Review Committee and recommends the names of proposed new members for consideration by the Executive Committee.

The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays is composed of critics and students of the cinema interested particularly in encouraging the artistic development of the motion picture. It reviews and publishes a critique of the finest films and assists community groups in the showing of unusual films to special audiences. Its pioneer activity has done much to lay the foundation for the Little Photoplay Theatre movement and to stimulate the organization of subscription groups to develop audiences for the support of the creative achievements of the screen.

## NATIONAL MOTION PICTURE COUNCIL

The community or field work of the National Board of Review is conducted under its National Motion Picture Council, through affiliated membership groups, service contact groups and correspondents throughout the country. The National Council assists in the organization and program of work of local groups which are usually called Councils.

These Councils follow a plan initiated by the National Board in 1916 of having a membership composed of representatives from many organizations, cultural, educational, recreational, religious, and civic, so that they typify the original movement for community participation in the development and best use of the motion picture as recreation and education.

The objectives of such organizations are as follows:

To demonstrate through the education of public opinion, the effectiveness of selection and classification, instead of censorship, as a means of forwarding the development of the motion picture and its best uses.

To encourage through open meetings, forums, classes and other means, the study of the motion picture as a medium of entertainment, education and artistic expression.

To concentrate the attention of the public on specific worthwhile films through the publication of a Photoplay Guide to the selected pictures being currently shown at local theatres.

To arrange family Friday night or week-end programs of selected films, and junior matinees of pictures particularly suited to the tastes of children, through cooperation with local exhibitors.

To endorse and further the use of visual education through motion pictures in the schools.

To arrange and promote occasional exhibitions of exceptional and cultural films that would not normally be shown in the commercial theatres.

### PUBLICATIONS

The National Board of Review and its Council as an aid to the groups carrying out these objectives furnishes an informational service through its publications.

#### National Board of Review Magazine (monthly)

\$2.00 a year for individual subscriptions  
\$1.00 a year to Council or club groups

#### Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures

\$2.50 a year when taken alone, available at a special rate of \$1.00 in conjunction with the Magazine.

#### Selected Pictures Catalog (annual) ..... 25c

#### Special Film Lists ..... 10c ea.

Such as Selected Films for Children's Showings, Selected Book-Films, Educational Films, etc.

#### National Board of Review—Its Background, Growth and Present Status ..... free

#### National Board of Review—How It Works ..... free

#### A Plan and a Program for Community Motion Picture Councils ..... 10c



New movies, the

# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

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Charles Laughton as Rembrandt (see page 7)

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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

- m ACCUSED—Dolores Del Rio, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. Screenplay by Zoe Akins and George Barrand. Directed by Thornton Freeland. Story of two young dancers—husband and wife—in Paris, and a crime of which the wife was accused. Interesting atmosphere and actors, and a good dramatic climax in an excellent court scene. United Artists.
- m \*AFTER THE THIN MAN—William Powell, Myrna Loy, "Asta." Screenplay by Dashiell Hammett. Directed by W. S. Van Dyke. Amusing and sophisticated story, excellently acted and with clever dialogue. Equal in entertainment, if not surpassing, to *The Thin Man*. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f BANJO ON MY KNEE—Barbara Stanwyck, Joel McCrea, Walter Brennan. Novel by Harry Hamilton. Directed by John Cromwell. Story of shanty-boat people on the Mississippi, and the troubles a frisky old man had getting the two young people together. A mixture of drama, comedy and show, with excellent episodes. Walter Brennan stands out in a likeable cast. 20th Century-Fox.
- m \*BELOVED ENEMY—Merle Oberon, Brian Aherne. Screenplay by John Balderston. Directed by H. C. Potter. A tensely interesting story of the Irish rebellion of 1921 with the horrors of war and a romance between the Irish leader and an English lady well combined. The acting of the entire cast excellent and the direction outstanding. United Artists.
- m \*CAMILLE—Greta Garbo, Robert Taylor. Novel and play by Alexandre Dumas. Directed by George Cukor. The old romantic tragedy of a girl who sacrifices her love for worldly pleasures when she finds that a man's real love was all she wanted only to later sacrifice that love. A lavish production, laid in the Paris of a hundred years ago, well directed and excellently acted. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f CHAMPAGNE WALTZ—Gladys Swarthout, Fred MacMurray. Screenplay by Billy Wilder and H. S. Kraft. Directed by A. E. Sutherland. An amusing musical comedy about a swing band that invades Vienna and puts the beautiful Viennese music out of business, but a Viennese orchestra retaliates by invading Broadway. Well acted, good dialogue and excellent music. Paramount.
- f CHARLIE CHAN AT THE OPERA—Warner Oland. Screenplay by Bess Meredyth. Directed by H. Bruce Humberstone. One of the best of this series, with a mystery worked out with fine effect, and hard to solve. 20th Century-Fox.
- f COLLEGE HOLIDAY—Jack Benny, Mary Boland, Martha Raye, Burns and Allen. Screenplay by a number of writers. Directed by Frank Tuttle. Light and amusing musical comedy, with good acting and singing and some very unique features. Paramount.
- f FUGITIVE IN THE SKY—Warren Hull, Harvey Stephens, Jean Muir. Screenplay by George Bricker. Directed by Nick Grinde. An exciting melodrama, which keeps one guessing until the very last minute. Warner.
- f GREAT GUY—James Cagney. From Saturday Evening Post "Johnny Cave" stories by James Edward Grant. Directed by John G. Blystone. The star is in his element as an ex-pugilist in charge of a city apartment, who wages war on a powerful racket. Fast-moving, wise-cracking and plenty of exciting moments. Grand National.
- f GOLD DIGGERS OF 1937—Dick Powell, Joan Blondell. Directed by Lloyd Bacon. Light and entertaining musical show of insurance salesmen and chorus girls. Lavish sets and amusing dialogue. First National.
- f HEAD HUNTERS OF BORNEO—Interesting and instructional picture showing the life and customs of the head hunting tribes. Excellent photography and of unusual interest in that the natives speak. Mutual.
- f ISLAND OF DEMONS—Most interesting and instructional film about the superstitions of the Chinese. The idealistic love of a native boy and girl is in strong contrast to the cruelties of the picture. Mutual.

(Continued on page 14)



# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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## Discussions on the Movies

*The Third of a Series to Suggest How Groups and Clubs May Investigate  
Some of the Aspects of the Motion Picture*

By JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

### THE EXPERIMENTAL AND ARTISTIC FILM

**B**OTH these terms, "experimental" and "artistic," have taken on, with a lot of people, unnecessarily exclusive meanings. They suggest something esoteric, highbrow, beyond the range of the ordinary movie-goer; by the same token, they tend to become the signs of a certain kind of esthetic snobbery.

Of course, reels of film in a can, stored in a vault, are just so much dead celluloid. The active vitality of a movie is suspended except when it is being projected on a screen for people to look at, which is only saying that an audience is a necessary part of the life of a movie. With things as they are it isn't possible to test whether most movies have any remains of life in them after their newness is gone and their first runs, slowing down to the final cheapest theatres, are over. Many a film is buried alive, probably, by the commercial practice of keeping only fairly recent productions current in the movie houses. And so the test of time, which is the final test of any work of art, is next to impossible to apply to films. Distrusting, as we ought to, the kindly way memory has of making something we once enjoyed seem in retrospect better than it really was, we are not sure that some of the old-time pictures deserve the aura of being a classic which has accumulated around them.

Yet we do have to take into account the reputations which have been given to those films numbered in the somewhat indefinite group constituting the "art of the cinema"—and not forget to take into account also the natural enthusiasm of the eager friends of the young art who saw each promising step as a tremendous stride forward. The more early films are rescued from the dumping ground and collected where they can be looked at again, the more clearly we shall see not only how far each step proceeded beyond the one before, but how far it got toward an achievement that impartial observers would have to admit was impressive. And we shall see, probably, that every film that made some advance was "experimental," and shall tend toward what is likely to be the judgment of future critics, that many of the cinematic works of art which are our small possession up to now are merely primitives, historically interesting but rather quaint.

So, the films that are called best one year, with some implication of permanent worth, may be hard even to recall a few years later, and surely that easy slipping into oblivion isn't characteristic of the immortal fruits of genius. Certainly one thing we expect of a work of art in any form is that it will keep its interest and give us some degree of refreshment every time we go back to it. Forms and technique may change, but not

the vitality beneath them if it is genuine.

It is hard to outline a study of the films which are generally called the artistic films of the past because they are so inaccessible. Where can you find the earlier pictures of the directors who made movie history—Griffith, Ince, von Stroheim, Vidor, Cruze, Sennett, Chaplin, De Mille, von Sternberg, to mention only some of the Americans? In addition, for those who want to trace all the development, there are the Swedish, German, Russian and French directors, whose work is gone from the possibility of studying almost as completely as the lost plays of Euripides.

One of the things that can be done, now that the habit of showing revivals seems to be spreading, is to watch the programs of houses that either habitually or occasionally do this, and see how films that stood out as unusual or exceptional when they were new hold up with the passing of time. If their original interest depended on some engaging personality, a freshness of theme, magnificence of production, some technical innovation, it may be found that these things, being essentially external and easy to imitate, have become a matter of course and no longer outstanding. Good photography, good acting, beautiful settings, a literate and effective script, are as much to be expected now in an adequate professional production as a readable style and legible printing in a book. But these are only the clothes a movie wears—is there something alive under them, interesting you, moving you, adding something to your experience of life, giving you something to remember? There must be if the picture has any claim to the enduring qualities that go into a work of art.

But "art," in this abiding sense, does not come along every week, perhaps not in a year, in the movies any more than in any other form, and just as anyone who wants to make a first hand study of the art of painting has to go to galleries and museums, so the student of the motion picture art has somehow to manage to see things that are special and permanent, outside the realm of current entertainment. This isn't a practical thing for an individual to do—it takes

group effort and group energy. It means making special programs for special showings, and sometimes a good deal of searching for the material to do it with. Only in this way, however, is there likely to be any chance of seeing such experimental films as the *avant garde* in France, for instance, used to make, or the masterpieces of the days of soundless movies, which advanced the peculiar art of the cinema to its most characteristic point. Without some sort of historical background there is something lacking in full esthetic appreciation of the motion picture.

*(The next article in this series will appear in the forthcoming issue of the Magazine).*

### Are You Going to Write About the Films?

**S**TUDY and discussion of the motion picture being taken up so widely and seriously, it might be profitable to suggest some topics for group papers. Therefore we are choosing from the List of Suggested Topics for Term Papers in the course on The Motion Picture: Its Artistic, Educational and Social Aspects, given under the joint auspices of the National Board of Review and the School of Education of New York University, certain subjects on which material is most likely to be available in public libraries. Also material in the form of books, articles and clippings is available on loan from the National Board and the Magazine has in past issues carried papers relating to these topics.

The following subjects should prove both interesting and informative: Scope of the Motion Picture, History of Motion Picture, Technical Aspects of the Motion Picture, Development of the Entertainment Film, The Scenario, The Art of Acting for the Cinema, The Direction of Photoplays, The Short Subject, The Newsreel, The Animated Cartoon, Color in the Motion Picture, Sound and Music in the Movies, Personal Motion Pictures, Scientific Films, Researches as to the Social and Educational Aspects of Entertainment Films, The Role of the Entertainment Films in the Trans-

*(Continued on page 10)*



# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS DEPARTMENT

*This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of Exceptional and Honorable*

*Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.*

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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## The Films of 1936

SEEING films day in and day out has its depressing effects, the worst of which is a pessimistic conviction that the screen will never grow up and that handsome mediocrity is to be the eternal rule. But the now well-established habit of pausing at the end of the year to take stock of the year's output is a good corrective. It reveals, at the present writing, that 1936 has produced some pretty admirable things. Nothing epoch-making, but a general level tending, however infinitesimally, toward at least post-adolescence, and some outstanding items that any year might point to with a good deal of pride.

The main characteristic of the year's films might be labeled with words something like those in the old-fashioned geography which described the French as a nation addicted to "light wines and dancing." *It Happened One Night* and *The Thin Man* go marching on, in spirit, and not a studio but what tries to infuse some of the sparkle and gaiety of those two famous pace-setters into its product. The revival from the depression also has its effect in the lightening of the cinematic spirits, in expansive plans and productions, and in a somewhat tentative lessening of the fear that seems to hold the screen from tackling questions of real social import.

The star system appears to be increasing its tendency toward a system of letting an all-round good cast supply substance for name glamor. An actor or two has rocketed up into box-office potency, but their stay-

ing powers have yet to be proved. Child actors have continued to thrive, Shirley Temple and Freddie Bartholomew settling down into staple goods, Mickey Rooney emerging as a fine young player, Jackie Cooper sliding into the eclipse of adolescence, and Bobby Breen blossoming into a new idol for the gushers and gurglers; innumerable other youngsters without box-office names are doing their jobs as honestly and efficiently as the grown-ups. The operatic cycle has suffered a waning, along with the G-Men epics, but the musical spectacle has flourished mightily, particularly in *The Great Ziegfeld*, which will be hard to beat for stupendous and colossal magnificence. There has been a special abundance of delightful comedies, with and without music. Color photography has progressed beyond the novelty of mere color to the point where it will have to compete with black-and-white as mere entertainment—and it's about time! France and England have sent us the best films from abroad, though the Italians are improving. The Russians have gone a bit stale in the last season.

The general professional excellence of production has reached a level where the Committee on Exceptional Photoplays feels that technical proficiency is so much to be taken for granted that it no longer needs to enter into the consideration of a film's outstanding points. The Committee is driven more and more to examining the subject-matter and the integrity with which it is treated, and how far the whole thing goes

beyond mere proficiency toward that state, so hard to define, of being art. With this in mind, the following were chosen from the American films of the year as the ten best, with *Mr. Deeds* the best of all.

1. *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*—a Columbia picture directed by Frank Capra from a script prepared by Robert Riskin. It is a comedy, but richer in significance and more mature in execution than anything this director has done before, without any diminution of the delightful qualities so characteristic of him. Incidentally it is another revelation of Gary Cooper's growth as an actor.

2. *The Story of Louis Pasteur*—the screen biography of a scientist, written by Sheridan Gibney and Pierre Collings and directed by William Dieterle. Its principal role splendidly acted by Paul Muni, it is another successful pioneering experiment of Warner Brothers, smashing the old tradition that such things would not go with movie audiences and breaking a new path for producers as well as preparing audiences for more things of its kind.

3. *Modern Times* — Charlie Chaplin again after a long wait, proving him still one of the great men of the screen, in a comedy of rather more explicit meaning than his previous films.

4. *Fury*—the first American film made by Fritz Lang, one of the world's greatest directors. It is a terrifically powerful arraignment of mob violence, and if the whole film had stayed at the level of its first half, without declining into a melodrama of vengeance and repentance, it would have been hard not to call it the best film of the year.

5. *Winterset*—a prize play of Maxwell Anderson's adapted by Anthony Veiller and directed by Alfred Santell. A strong melodrama of social and legal injustice, peopled by some extraordinarily vivid and moving characters, in which Burgess Meredith and Eduardo Ciannelli make their entrance, and Margo her belated re-entrance, upon the screen.

6. *The Devil Is a Sissy*—written by the flitting and individual Rowland Brown and

directed by W. S. Van Dyke, whose brilliance shines in all sorts of fields. Surely the best film about youngsters Hollywood has ever turned out, with some revealing things about how street kids grow up into gangsters. It does not follow through to its logical end but degenerates into a sob-stuff finish. It is notable for excellent acting all through, but especially Jackie Cooper and Freddie Bartholomew, and, most especially, Mickey Rooney—a strong candidate for highest acting honors of the year.

7. *Ceiling Zero*—a play by Frank Wead made into a film by Howard Hawkes. It is a moving chapter in the history of aviation, telling of the passing of the daredevil type of war-time flier and his struggle to adapt himself to safe-and-sane commercial flying. In it James Cagney and Pat O'Brien set a high standard for an excellent cast.

8. *Romeo and Juliet*—M. G. M.'s proof that Shakespeare can be translated to the screen and be better than on the stage. Adapted by Talbot Jennings and directed by George Cukor, with Norma Shearer, Leslie Howard and John Barrymore heading the cast, it is a thoroughly beautiful production which Shakespeare himself might well have delighted to see.

9. *The Prisoner of Shark Island*—Twentieth Century-Fox's story, written by Nunnally Johnson and directed by John Ford, of the tragic falling down of justice in railroading into prison a good doctor suspected of implication in the assassination of Lincoln. It ranks with *Fury* and *Winterset* as an effective protest against injustice.

10. *The Green Pastures*—an unique picture from Marc Connelly's unique play, directed by Mr. Connelly and William Keighley. An appealing presentation of Southern negro characters and religious beliefs.

Of the foreign-made films, the following were selected as the ten best, with *La Kermesse Heroique* as the best film the Committee had seen during the year.

1. *La Kermesse Heroique*—produced by Films Sonores Tobis, and directed by Jacques Feyder from Bernard Zimmer's adaptation of a novel by Charles Spaak. An



historical comedy of the Spanish invasion of Flanders, superlatively well produced and acted, it is a sprightly and mellow comment on the human nature of all times and places.

2. *The New Earth*—of all the documentary films of the Dutch director, Joris Ivens, this is the most mature and eloquent. It pictures in masterly fashion the reclamation of land from the Zuyder Zee, from a social point of view that makes it not only a document but a commentary.

3. *Rembrandt*—made by London Films, and directed by Alexander Korda from a script by Carl Zuckmayer, this beautiful filming of the life of the great Dutch painter shows Charles Laughton in his best role.

4. *The Ghost Goes West*—Robert Sherwood wrote this story for Rene Clair, in his first film made outside of France, to direct for London films. It is Clair working in an alien environment, but it has enough of his comic magic to make it notable.

5. *Nine Days a Queen*—one of the best of the English historical films, made by Gaumont British with Robert Stevenson directing a story by Miles Malleison. It relates the touching episode of Lady Jane Grey's brief and tragic reign as Queen of England, with Nova Pilbeam, Cedric Hardwicke and Desmond Tester heading an excellent cast.

6. *We Are From Kronstadt*—a stirring piece of Soviet Russia's revolutionary history, directed by E. Szigan, presented by Amkino.

7. *Son of Mongolia*—produced in the Mongolian Republic by Lenifilm, directed by Ilya Trauberg, this is the best of recent Soviet films, partly documentary in nature, concerning the federation of the Mongolians into the Soviet Republics.

8. *The Yellow Cruise*—a record of an automotive expedition from Beirut to Peiping, abounding in pictorial richness. Directed by Andre Sauvage and distributed by the French Motion Picture Corporation.

9. *Les Miserables*—a long film made from Victor Hugo's novel and directed by Raymond Bernard. In it Harry Baur gives one of his superb performances.

10. *The Secret Agent*—a spy melodrama derived from one of W. Somerset Maugham's stories, directed by that English genius at melodramatic film-making, Alfred Hitchcock.

In addition to these lists selected for artistic merit, the members of the Board's Review Committees made a list of ten pictures chosen for their popular appeal.

1. *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*
2. *Romeo and Juliet*
3. *The Story of Louis Pasteur*
4. *San Francisco*
5. *The Great Ziegfeld*
6. *Anthony Adverse*
7. *Dodsworth*
8. *The Green Pastures*
9. *Fury*
10. *Winterset*

An interesting thing about this "popular" list is how nearly it coincides with the list chosen by different standards. Three close runners-up were *My Man Godfrey*, *The Gay Desperado*, and *Sing Baby Sing*.

## Rembrandt

Written by Carl Zuckmayer, directed by Alexander Korda, photographed by Georges Perinal. A London Film Production, released by United Artists.

### The cast

<i>Rembrandt Van Rijn</i> .....	Charles Laughton
<i>Geertie Dirx</i> .....	Gertrude Lawrence
<i>Hendrickje Stoffels</i> .....	Elsa Lanchester
<i>Fabrizius</i> .....	Edward Chapman
<i>Titus van Rijn</i> .....	John Bryning
<i>Titus (as child)</i> .....	Richard Gole
<i>Ornia</i> .....	Meinhart Maur
<i>Banning Cocq</i> .....	Walter Hudd
<i>Govaert Flink</i> .....	John Clements
<i>Jan Six</i> .....	Henry Hewitt
<i>Church Warden</i> .....	George Merritt
<i>Minister</i> .....	John Turnbull
<i>Auctioneer</i> .....	Sam Livesey
<i>Hertsbeke</i> .....	Lawrence Hanrey
<i>Dr. Menasseh</i> .....	Abraham Sofaer

THE biography of an artist is a hard thing to make drama of, to keep the sort of conflict going that can be externalized in visible action, and at the same time put over that intangible essence which finally remains the most important thing about an artist—not how he lived or loved or fought but his creative power. The stage

tries to do it over and over, and over and over again fails.

Surprisingly, this film attains a striking measure of success in just that difficult undertaking. It is episodic, with little of the organic growth of one period out of another by which we ordinarily expect to be given perception into the development of a man; it begins well along in Rembrandt's career, when he is married and established, so that we have no glimpse of the influences that worked with his native genius to make him a great painter; it is more than a little reticent about the deeper springs of feeling and appetite that made him from beginning to end such a lusty lover of life. And yet the total effect is a satisfying and endearing picture of a living man in the setting of his time and place, solidly three-dimensional as a human figure, palpably animated by that fourth-dimensional quality that is always gathering life to itself and re-creating it into art.

Alexander Korda made the film, with Georges Perinal helping inestimably with his camera, catching countless details of Dutch buildings, rooms, landscape, people, that create an atmosphere beautifully attuned to the mood of the picture. The Holland of the seventeenth century, with its sturdy burghers and energetic housewives—and in its midst Rembrandt, fashionable and successful as a painter, then going out of style and into bankruptcy, growing older, getting forgotten except by a few who understand his work and look up to him as master; but through loss—of wealth, love, youth—always zestful of life, increasing in power as an artist.

Saskia, the loved first wife who died and left him a son, never appears in the picture. The two women who do appear are the housekeeper, possessive and nagging, trying out of a love that had no notion how to be tender to keep Rembrandt respectable and prosperous, and the servant girl who brought a steadying devotion into the painter's life when his fortunes were running low. Two excellent characters, vividly realized by Gertrude Lawrence and Elsa Lanchester.

But these women, the only "love inter-

ests," are mere episodes. What became of the first we do not know—she exits in a tantrum, there is a time lapse, and we never hear of her again. The second dies.

In fact the whole picture is just a series of episodes, some of them fine, some trivial, some disappointing that should have been fine. But it is all held together so superbly by Charles Laughton that in retrospect it becomes a unit, a life we have seen lived.

Laughton has made an astonishing gallery of screen portrayals. The pitiful little Cockney murderer in *Payment Deferred*, Nero, Henry the Eighth, Ruggles, Javert, Captain Bligh—no screen actor has come anywhere near so large a compass of characterizations, each one vivid and individual. But in every one of them was something of *tour de force*, remarkable cleverness and skill that excited admiration but rarely sympathy, always just that shade too theatrical that kept it from really touching the heart. Here in *Rembrandt*, however, there is an inescapable increase in Laughton's stature as an actor. That oft-praised art that conceals art is at work, and not now as so often before do we sit admiringly watching, conscious even as we watch that we are seeing something that we are inwardly labeling good acting—here we give ourselves up to it as to a spell, yielding it the tribute of complete absorption, not stopping to analyse till it is all over. It is easy to believe that Rembrandt was like that, like the painter Laughton makes live so vitally on the screen.

(Rated Exceptional)

J. S. H.

## The Plough and the Stars

*Adapted by Dudley Nichols from Sean O'Casey's play, directed by John Ford. photographed by Joseph August, musical director Nathaniel Shilkret, art director Van Nest Polglase, technical director George Bernard McNulty. Produced and distributed by RKO-Radio.*

### The cast

Jack Clitheroe	.....Preston Foster
Nora Clitheroe	.....Barbara Stanwyck
Fluther Good	.....Barry Fitzgerald
The Covey	.....Denis O'Dea
Bessie Burgess	.....Eileen Crowe
Brennan	.....G. J. McCormick
Pearse	.....Arthur Shields



Mrs. Gogan ..... Una O'Connor  
 Connolly ..... Moroni Olsen  
 Uncle Peter ..... J. M. Kerrigan  
 Mollser ..... Bonita Granville  
 Rosie ..... Erin O'Brien-Moore  
 Langen ..... Neil Fitzgerald

Barman ..... Robert Homans  
 Sergeant Tinley ..... Brandon Hurst  
 Corporal Stoddard ..... Cyril McLaglen  
 Boy ..... Wesley Barry  
 Women at Barricade ..... Mary Gordon  
 ..... Doris Lloyd



*The leaders of the uprising in "The Plough and the Stars"*

THIS picture might never have been made if it were not for *The Informer*, and that is the film with which it is inevitably going to be compared. The similarities, aside from having the potent combination of John Ford and Dudley Nichols as director and adaptor, are the Dublin setting and the period of wartime Irish plots for rebellion. But the dramatic problems are quite different.

*The Informer*, where in the space of a single night a man was tempted to turn a fellow rebel over to the English, did it, and was killed for it, was extraordinarily unified. Everything was concentrated in one man, the main outlines of story were simple and direct, and with the right actor the director had all he needed to make an effective tragedy. *The Plough and the Stars*

is a much tougher job. Its hero is not a man but a rebellion, an Irish rebellion, with a dozen aspects of the Irish character and temperament playing their part in it, which tends to scatter the interest and complicate the drive of the action. Moreover, by trying to emphasize the situation between a young husband and wife (a natural business device because of the stars playing the parts) the film sacrifices the interest of its main theme to magnify what was only an incidental part of the theme. This dramatic weakness is made obvious—perhaps it was created—by the complete ineffectiveness of Barbara Stanwyck in the part of the young wife.

The plot, in its larger outlines, is the Easter week Dublin uprising of 1916 and its failure. We see it sometimes as a mass

movement, more often as it involved certain types of individuals. Heroes and patriots, braggarts and cowards, most of them from among the poor in Dublin, show how they enter into the battle for freedom. The uprising is plotted carefully, the rebels capture the post-office, then civil warfare rages through the streets, the English lorries careening over the pavements spitting machine gun bullets. There is heroic fighting on the barricade and drunken looting of the wrecked shops. Rapidly the rebels are overpowered, their leader captured and executed, and the flag of the rebellion—the Plough and the Stars—wavers down from its pole over the rebel citadel. The death and destruction have done nothing but to water the hopes for Irish freedom with still more Irish blood.

That is the main pattern, and its threads are woven of men and women and boys and girls, each with a bit of personal life overshadowed by a great mass event. There are Jack Clitheroe and his wife Nora, newly married with a promise from him to her that he will take no more part in rebel plottings. But he is made a commandant in the Irish Citizen Army, and his patriotism cannot resist the call of duty in spite of all Nora's pleadings that their love is the only thing that matters. There are Mrs. Gogan and Mrs. Burgess, cronies of different political sympathies, eternally brawling. Mrs. Gogan's little girl, dying of consumption and dreaming of growing up to have a family. Fluther Good, scrappy, pepper-tempered, looting the barrooms in the wake of the machine gun destruction. The young Covey, spouting socialism and hiding from the fighting. The idealistic leaders, uttering the noble old sentiments of Irish aspiration and meeting death nobly. Women tending the wounded on the barricade, boys sniping English soldiers from the roofs. A richly varied panorama of Irish characters, seen in the crucial woes of a national crisis.

Dudley Nichols has made a script that does plentiful justice to Sean O'Casey's play, extending its action and emotion to a wider field than the stage could cover and knitting its various elements into a more coherent and unified sweep of movement. John Ford has

directed the film in characteristic fashion. Some of the effects he is fond of have become almost trade-marks of his work—the high sweet tenor singing in the streets, soldiers marching to the swirl of bagpipes, a torn poster on a wall, dim streets and shadowed rooms. They are still effective, but one becomes increasingly conscious of them as stylistic devices. They are only incidental to larger effects, which are for the most part virile and stirring, and his whole treatment of these Irish themes and characters is honest and sympathetic.

Of course a film depends tremendously on its actors, and here Mr. Ford has a fine array of Irish talent to work with. Barry Fitzgerald, J. M. Kerrigan, Eileen Crowe, Denis O'Dea, Arthur Shields, all from Dublin's Abbey Theatre, assure rich brogues and authentic behavior for parts that would mean little without their native flavor. Preston Foster manages the young Commandant with all the right manliness and feeling, and Una O'Connor conceals her customary cockneyism enough not to be too obviously unhibernian. The weakness in the cast is Barbara Stanwyck. She can brood picturesquely, and work herself up into a grand hysteria of tears and screaming, but she has done just this same thing so often that it seems more of a habit than acting—we wait for it, and when it comes, as it always does, we know she has done her best and nothing more can be expected. The part of Nora calls for far more than that, whether to blend with the other parts or to dominate them (as a star is popularly supposed to do). Miss Stanwyck manages to make even her lines seem trite and phoney—which perhaps many of them are when not uttered in the beguiling fashion of the native Irishman.—J. S. H.

(*Rated Exceptional*)

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(Continued from page 4)

mission of Ideas, The Research Function in the Production of Photoplays, The Effect of Entertainment Films on Social Attitudes, The Motion Picture as an Instrument of Visual Instruction, and Motion Picture Appreciation in the Schools.



## Book Reviews

### The New Technique of Screen Writing

By TAMAR LANE

THE secondary title of this book, "A Practical Guide to the Writing and Marketing of Photoplays" indicates its purpose and scope. The author, out of his own Hollywood experience, knows how the producers of films may be expected to deal with material that is submitted to them, and what shape such material should be put in to get the most favorable attention. He writes not only about the technique of photoplay writing, from all its various angles, but also about such practical matters as the selling of stories and the prices they bring, the question of copyright and protection, and the restrictions imposed by the Hays Code and by the producers themselves. In addition to a dictionary of technical terms generally used in the studios and lists of studios and of representative story agents, there are complete examples of an author's original manuscript (which was sold), a script-writer's adaptation of a story for the screen, and a full detailed shooting script.

J. S. H.

Published by Whittlesey House, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., N. Y. C. Price \$3.00.

### Four-Star Scripts

By LORRAINE NOBLE

HERE is a book that we take up with a great deal of interest, first because its title is one particularly intriguing to us, for Four-Star, as our readers know, is the name given to the Board's junior motion picture clubs, and this is another indication of the appropriateness of that designation in connection with the films. Secondly, because we feel that Miss Noble from her experience in various phases of production and use with both the entertainment and the educational film is well qualified to present this study of motion picture scripts. And thirdly, we believe that such a book fills a real need, for the motion pic-

ture is receiving increased attention as a subject of study in college and school courses in English, in journalism, composition, appreciation, etc., with however not so much in the way of text material available.

This provides one answer to that demand, for it presents clearly the preparation of a script whether written originally for the screen or adapted from a novel or a play. It furnishes information for the prospective writer and the student of motion picture criticism. This does not necessarily mean that the book is limited to classroom use for as it is written it can well be recommended as source material for the use of clubs, councils, forums and other organizations in their motion picture appreciation study.

The shooting scripts given in the book, each covering a chapter, are those of the outstanding films *Lady for a Day*, *It Happened One Night*, *Little Women*, and *The Story of Louis Pasteur*.

B. G.

Published by Doubleday Doran. Price \$2.50.

### The Photoplay as Literary Art

By DR. WALTER BARNES

THE photoplay is studied from many angles—as entertainment, as a medium of expression, as an art form. In this last it is perhaps more likely to be considered as pictorial art, but it merits too, consideration as literary art. And it is as literary art that it is here analyzed by Dr. Walter Barnes. Dr. Barnes is Professor of the Teaching of English at New York University, and in his study and presentation of English he has for some time given a place to the motion picture. In fact his attention to the motion picture as literature, when in 1931 he was Chairman of the Committee on Literature in the Secondary School of the National Council of Teachers of English, was a forerunner of much of the notice given to-day to the motion picture as subject matter in school English courses.

Therefore, those who are studying the motion picture, either within the schools or without, will find valuable his latest publication on this subject, a fifty page monograph entitled "The Photoplay as Literary Art." It is prepared in a form easy to

read and easy to study by chapter and by chapter sub-division. And we might add it is easy to buy, costing only 50c and is available from Educational and Recreational Guides, Inc., at 138 Washington Street, Newark, N. J.

B. G.

### For the Sake of Shadows

By MAX MILLER

**M**AX MILLER, who made fame as a reporter in such books as "I Cover the Waterfront," went to work in a Hollywood studio as a writer, and this book is about how he felt there. He felt pretty thoroughly miserable, apparently, brooding over how much writing talent had been enslaved, to no good purpose, by the lure of Hollywood salaries. He is still a vivid reporter, and his picture of movie studios is often true, with all its bitterness. There was no time when he was not discontented there, for he seems to be without the slightest interest in the making of movies, and all the fascination of creating motion pictures—which, though they were making nothing but a Mother Goose tale, would be absorbing in its technical side to anyone really interested—never touched him. So his book, even at its very good best, is not a picture of Hollywood but the personal picture of a misfit in Hollywood.—J. S. H.

*Published by Dutton & Co. Price \$2.50.*

### The Motion Picture in Its Educational and Social Aspects

**T**HE Journal of Educational Sociology, a magazine of theory and practice, published monthly, appears from time to time as a special motion picture edition. The November, 1936, issue treats the general subject "The Motion Picture and Its Educational and Social Aspects."

The following articles make up the contents: The Motion Picture: Its Nature and Scope—Frederic M. Thrasher, Associate Professor of Education, New York University; The Educational Talking Picture—V. C. Arnsperger, Director of Research, Erpi Picture Consultants; Modernization, by Way of the Educational Film—Lorraine Noble, Administrator, Educational Film

Project, American Council on Education; The Motion Picture and Social-Hygiene Education—Jean B. Pinney, Associate Director, American Social Hygiene Association; The Cinema Enters the Library—George Freedley, Librarian, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library; Amateur-Group Film Producing With Economy—Kenneth F. Space, Staff Member, Religious Motion Picture Foundation; The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures—How It Works—Wilton A. Barrett, Executive Secretary, National Board of Review of Motion Pictures.

*The Journal is published at 26 Washington Place, New York City—Single copies at 35c.*

### The Amateur 10 Best Ratings

**M**OVIE MAKERS, official publication of the Amateur Cinema League, offers the ten best non-theatrical films of 1936, as follows, listed alphabetically.

*A Day with the Young Martins*, 400 feet, 16mm., black and white, by John Martin, ACL, of Leek, Staffordshire, England.

*Architecture and Fine Arts*, 300 feet, 16mm., black and white, with Kodachrome insert, by Frances Christeson and Harry Merrick, of Los Angeles, Calif.

*East Coast*, 1200 feet, 16mm., black and white, by the Rockville Cinema Club, of Rockville Center, Long Island, N. Y.

*Moroccan Cities*, 400 feet, 16mm., black and white, by Mrs. Gwladys Sills, ACL, of New York City.

*Nite Life*, 800 feet, 16mm., Kodachrome, by J. Kinney Moore, ACL, of Beverly Hills, Calif.

*On Every Hand*, 400 feet, 16mm., Kodachrome, by William L. Zeller, ACL, of Peoria, Ill.

*Two Weeks*, 200 feet, 8mm., black and white and Kodachrome, by W. W. Champion, ACL, of Fresno, Calif.

#### SPECIAL CLASS

*As We Forge*, 425 feet, 16mm., black and white, by the Religious Motion Picture Foundation, of New York City; movie makers: Kenneth F. Space, ACL, and Dan Lindsay.

*(Continued on page 15)*



# The Juniors Are the Electorate

## Their Ten Best

QUITE oblivious to the solicitations of older people who claim to know exactly what children should like in the way of movies, the young people of America as represented by The National Board's Young Reviewers and 4-Star Clubs throughout the country, have just finished choosing the ten pictures they consider the best made in 1936. The list represents a highly critical attitude on the part of the younger generation to its motion picture entertainment, and in variety and intelligence of selection ranks very respectably with the similar lists selected by adults.

In their order of preference, the ten pictures are:

*The Great Ziegfeld*  
*Anthony Adverse*  
*San Francisco*  
*Romeo and Juliet*  
*The Charge of the Light Brigade*  
*Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*  
*Story of Louis Pasteur*  
*The Devil Is a Sissy*  
*The Last of the Mohicans*  
*Mary of Scotland*

Ranking just below the first ten and grouped closely together in votes are *The Green Pastures*, *Fury*, *Swing Time*, *Modern Times*, *The General*, *Died at Dawn* and *Texas Rangers*.

For the second year in succession, Shirley Temple is conspicuously absent from the "best ten" list. So for that matter are all other "cute" kids, who usually annoy, rather than entertain, youthful audiences. The single exception in the way of pictures with child actors is *The Devil Is a Sissy*, which contemplates the problems of juvenile delinquency in pretty vigorous terms.

Love, as usual, took a pretty severe battering from youthful hands, and Robert Taylor, who set many a female heart a-beating during the past year, has not a single picture listed among the first twenty. Only *Romeo and Juliet* found favor in its love

scenes among child audiences. The youngsters considered the love scenes here indispensable, and found them very real, in contrast with the mushy passages often dragged in heedlessly to give box-office attractions to other pictures. Most of those who had read Shakespeare admitted to being a little fearful about *Romeo and Juliet* before seeing it, but afterwards confessed that the picture was vastly entertaining. They didn't expect to rush out and read Shakespeare avidly, but they did hope to see more of his works on the screen, handled with the same good taste that distinguished *Romeo and Juliet*.

For the benefit of comparison the total from various sections of the country as well as the metropolitan area has been divided into two age classifications for both boys and girls, and the pictures are listed according to the votes received:

### BOYS (8-13 YEARS)

*The Devil Is a Sissy*  
*The Last of the Mohicans*  
*San Francisco*  
*Texas Rangers*  
*Anthony Adverse*  
*The Great Ziegfeld*  
*The Big Game*  
*The Charge of the Light Brigade*  
*A Night at the Opera*  
*Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*

### BOYS (14-17 YEARS)

*The Great Ziegfeld*  
*San Francisco*  
*Romeo and Juliet*  
 (Above 3 tied for first place)  
*The Charge of the Light Brigade*  
*Anthony Adverse*  
*The Story of Louis Pasteur*  
*Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*  
*The Devil Is a Sissy*  
*The Last of the Mohicans*  
*Swing Time*

## GIRLS (8-13 YEARS)

*The Great Ziegfeld*  
*Anthony Adverse*  
*San Francisco*  
*The Devil Is a Sissy*  
*Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*  
*The Charge of the Light Brigade*  
*Ramona*  
*The Last of the Mohicans*  
*Show Boat*  
*Swing Time*

## GIRLS (14-17 YEARS)

*The Great Ziegfeld*  
*Anthony Adverse*  
*Romeo and Juliet*  
*San Francisco*  
*The Charge of the Light Brigade*  
*Story of Louis Pasteur*  
*Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*  
*Green Pastures*  
*Mary of Scotland*  
*Dodsworth*

P. H.

## Selected Pictures Guide

(Continued from page 2)

- f MAN OF AFFAIRS—George Arliss. Play "The Nelson Touch" by Neil Grant. Directed by Herbert Mason. The star playing a dual role of twin brothers—one a member of Parliament, the other returning to England from the Far East impersonates his brother in an effort to keep Britain out of war. The acting of Mr. Arliss is excellent. Gaumont-British.
- f ONE IN A MILLION—Sonja Henie, Adolphe Menjou, Don Ameche, Jean Hersholt. Screenplay by Leonard Praskins and Mark Kelly. Directed by Sidney Lanfield. The delightful young star's exquisite skill on the ice, plus the irresistible Ritz Brothers tuneful songs, and a pleasant story about the complications attendant upon the winning of the Olympic ice-skating championship, result in a highly entertaining picture. 20th Century-Fox.
- f \*PLAINSMAN, THE—Gary Cooper, Jean Arthur, Jimmy Ellison. Screenplay by Waldemar Young, Harold Lamb and Lynn Riggs. Directed by Cecil B. DeMille. A big and stirring Western, concerned with Wild Bill Hickok, Calamity Jane and Buffalo Bill, and the efforts to carry out Lincoln's ambition to make the frontier safe for settlers. One of the best of its kind. Paramount.
- m \*PLOUGH AND THE STARS, THE—See Exceptional Photoplays Department, page 8.
- f RACING LADY—Ann Dvorak, Smith Bal-  
 lew. Story "All Scarlet" by Damon Run-  
 yon. Directed by Wallace Fox. A story  
 of a girl horse trainer who becomes famous  
 for her ability. Some good shots of horse  
 racing. RKO-Radio.
- ff RAINBOW ON THE RIVER—Bobby Breen,  
 Charles Butterworth, May Robson. Novel  
 "Toinette's Philip" by Mrs. C. V. Jamison.  
 Directed by Kurt Neumann. A sentimental  
 and amusing story of a young orphan  
 brought up among the negroes in New Or-  
 leans, then transplanted to his rich and  
 cranky grandmother's home in New York.  
 Fine, appealing singing by the youthful  
 star and plenty of pathos and comedy.  
 RKO-Radio.
- m \*REMBRANDT—See Exceptional Photoplays  
 Department. Page 7.
- f SING ME A LOVE SONG—James Melton,  
 Patricia Ellis. Screenplay by Harry Sou-  
 ber. Directed by Raymond Enright. An  
 amusing musical romance in which a young  
 playboy becomes a clerk in his father's  
 store. Good comedy is supplied by a klep-  
 tomaniac. First National.
- m SINNER TAKE ALL—Bruce Cabot, Mar-  
 garet Lindsay, Joseph Calleia. Novel by  
 Whitman Chambers. Directed by Errol  
 Taggart. A pretty good detective yarn,  
 well directed and acted, with a mystery  
 that keeps the guessers busy. Metro-Gold-  
 wyn-Mayer.
- ff STOWAWAY — Shirley Temple, Robert  
 Young, Alice Faye. Screenplay by Sam  
 Engel. Directed by William A. Seiter. Talk-  
 ing Chinese is Shirley's latest accomplish-  
 ment and she takes it in her stride with  
 her usual bright ease. There is a pleasant  
 romance which the little star, as an orphan  
 befriended by the young lovers, brings  
 to a happy ending. 20th Century-Fox.
- f \*THAT GIRL FROM PARIS—Lily Pons,  
 Jack Oakie, Gene Raymond. Screenplay by  
 J. Cary Wonderly, and Jane Murfin. Di-  
 rected by Leigh Mason. A romantic com-  
 edy, of course with music, about a French  
 singer who smuggled herself into America  
 with a Yankee swing band. Some unusually  
 good numbers, and Jack Oakie provides hi-  
 larious comedy. RKO-Radio.
- f THREE SMART GIRLS—Deanna Durbin,  
 Binnie Barnes, Charles Winniger, Ray Mil-  
 land. Screenplay by Adele Comandini. Di-  
 rected by Henry Koster. An unusually en-  
 tertaining picture about how three young  
 girls kept their divorced father from mar-  
 rying a fortune hunter. The entire cast  
 is excellent and the singing of 14-year-old  
 Deanna Durbin is very fine. Universal.
- m WE WHO ARE ABOUT TO DIE—Preston  
 Foster, Ann Dvorak, John Beal. Book by  
 David Lamson. Directed by Christy Ca-



banne. A tense story about a youth framed and sentenced to hang. The plot deals with the men in the death house and crooked politics—convincing up to a certain point and then it becomes hokumish. Production is well handled and the acting excellent. RKO-Radio.

## SHORT SUBJECTS

### INFORMATIONALS

- f ALONG THE MEDITERRANEAN—In Technicolor, beautiful as well as educational. Suggested for schools and libraries. Worth being kept permanently available. Vitaphone.
- f ANNIE LAURIE—How the song came to be written. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj CHESAPEAKE BAY RETRIEVER, THE—Fascinating pictures of these clever dogs. Educational.
- f COLORFUL ISLANDS—Beautiful islands of Madagascar, and Seychelles, the latter believed to have been the Garden of Eden. In color. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj DOGGING IT AROUND THE WORLD—About dogs. 20th Century-Fox.
- f GIVE ME LIBERTY—Patrick Henry delivering his famous speech. In color—beautiful as well as educational. Worth being kept permanently available. Suggested for schools and libraries. Vitaphone.
- f GRAVEYARD OF SHIPS—Excellent scenes of Cape Hatteras, strewn with the skeletons of storm-wrecked vessels. RKO-Radio.
- f HURLING—The exciting game explained by Pete Smith. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj \*IN OLD WYOMING—Beauties of Wyoming in color with good cowboy music. Suggested for schools and libraries. Worth being kept permanently available. Paramount.
- f LADIES DAY—Women in various kinds of athletics. RKO-Radio.
- f \*MARCH OF TIME NO. 4 (Series 3)—The present situation in Belgium under the new King and the Rexist movement; the question of the St. Lawrence waterway development; and the growth and usefulness of the Federal theatre projects. Worth being kept permanently available. RKO-Radio.
- f MARCH OF TIME NO. 5 (Series 3)—Women in business in New York; modern China, emphasizing the growth of Shanghai, and touching upon the activities of Chiang Kai-Shek and Chang. RKO-Radio.
- f NORTHERN LIGHTS—The beauties of Sweden, its people and their customs. In color. Suggested for schools and libraries. Worth being kept permanently available. Vitaphone.
- f ORIENTAL PARADISE—Showing the beautiful flowers of Japan—in color. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 5—Growing bamboo and its uses; wild pony round-up on a Virginia island; Vienna choir-boys singing "Silent Night." Paramount.
- f PATHE TOPICS NO. 3—The Flying Dutchmen; Alpine Carnival; Dr. Rockwell. RKO-Radio.
- f PICTURESQUE SOUTH AFRICA—Lovely color scenic of Capetown showing the Rhodes' memorial and the beauties of the surroundings. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f PLANE DEVILS—Evolution of the airplane and stunt fliers. Columbia.
- f POPULAR SCIENCE NO. 3—Pretzel making; unbreakable glass; studying animals at Notre Dame, etc. Paramount.
- f PUBLIC PAYS, THE (Crime Does Not Pay Series)—Clever way the police work. Good for Crime Prevention Week, etc. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f SINGING WHEELS—Auto races from kid derbies to the Vanderbilt Cup Race. Unusual in not showing any horrible accidents. RKO-Radio.
- fj \*SPORTING PALS—An amazing picture of 6 pet otters, their pals—two dogs and a raccoon, and their master who is devoted to them. An unusual picture—good for "Be Kind to Animals" Week. Worth being kept permanently available. Paramount.
- f STRANGER THAN FICTION NOS. 30-32—Strange people and things all over the world. Universal.
- fj TOURING BRAZIL—One of the good Magic Carpet Series. 20th Century-Fox.
- fj WANTED A MASTER—An appealing story of how a stray dog finds a master. Excellent for humane programs. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj WHERE CHAMPS MEET—Madison Square Garden, and the preparations for the many kinds of games held there. Paramount.
- f YELLOWSTONE PARK—The wonders and beauties—in color. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

### CARTOONS

- fj BOY AND HIS DOG, A (Color Rhapsody)—How a boy's bad dream cured him of teasing his puppy. Good for humane programs. Columbia.
- j CHRISTMAS COMES BUT ONCE A YEAR—Grampy plays Santa Claus to the orphanage children. Paramount.
- fj COO COO NUT GROVE, THE (Merrie Melody)—Motion picture stars caricatured. Vitaphone.
- fj DON DONALD (Silly Symphony)—Donald Duck has troubles with a senorita. United Artists.
- fj GOLFERS, THE—Amusing antics of three monkeys on the golf course. Universal.
- fj I'M IN THE ARMY NOW (Popeye)—Popeye and his rival try to get in the Army and Popeye makes it on spinach. Paramount.
- fj KNIGHTS FOR A DAY—Amusing Eenie, Meenie and Moe, the three monkeys, steal from a wealthy old bird to make a merry Christmas for some poor unfortunates. Universal.
- fj LITTLE BEAU PORKY—Based on the Beau Geste kind of story. Vitaphone.
- fj LITTLE CAESAR (Happy Harmonies)—A little mouse's dream makes him a wiser and better mouse. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj MAKING FRIENDS (Betty Boop)—Pudgy goes out to make friends and succeeds too well. Paramount.
- fj MORE KITTENS (Silly Symphony)—A charming cartoon. United Artists.
- fj SINDBAD THE SAILOR (Popeye)—Two reels of Popeye in technicolor—a little too long. Popeye braves the dangers of Sindbad's island to save Olive Oil. Paramount.
- j TURKEY DINNER—Three little monkeys try to cook a Thanksgiving dinner. Universal.
- fj WORM TURNS, THE (Mickey Mouse)—Mickey invents a concoction which makes timid and small creatures invincibly courageous. United Artists.

### COMEDIES, MUSICALS, NOVELTIES, SERIALS AND SKITS

- j ACE DRUMMOND (Serial) No. 13—Final episode of the airways serial. Universal.
- f BROADWAY HIGHLIGHTS NO. 8—Game at Polo Grounds; National Broadcasting Studio; etc. Paramount.
- f CLYDE MCCOY AND HIS SUGAR BLUES ORCHESTRA—Good blues playing with the novelty of showing non-professional dancers on the floor. Vitaphone.
- f DEEP SOUTH—Cotton pickers wedding festivities—some excellent singing by Hall Johnson choir. RKO-Radio.
- f GOLD MANIA—A prospector's greed leads him on year after year in search of gold. Nice scenery. RKO-Radio.
- f HERE COMES THE CIRCUS—Circus acts, including Poodles Hanaford and his family, which recalls vividly the old one-ring tent show. Vitaphone.
- f LEGEND OF THE LEI—Simple story of Hawaiian love, in color. Educational.
- f MUSIC MUSIC EVERYWHERE—Clyde Lucas and his orchestra. Paramount.
- f SCREEN SNAPSHOTS No. 3—Visit to Hollywood. Columbia.
- f SPOOKY HOOKY—Amusing story of Oug Gang's visit to the school at night. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f THAT'S PICTURES—J. C. Flippen changing to screen devices. Vitaphone.

## Annual Conference

THE National Board's Annual meeting will be held in New York City, February 4th to 6th at the Hotel Pennsylvania. All readers of the magazine are cordially invited to come.

(Continued from page 12)

Mount Vernon Seminary, 1025 feet, 16mm., Kodachrome, by the T. W. Willard Motion Picture Company, of N. Y. C.

The Story of Maytag, 1400 feet, 16mm., black and white, by Fred Maytag, II, ACL, of Newton, Iowa.

## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures is a citizen body, organized in 1909 by the People's Institute of New York City as a medium for reflecting intelligent public opinion regarding a growing art and entertainment. This is still the Board's function, together with that of disseminating information on the subject of motion pictures and carrying on a constructive program having to do with community cooperation in the advancement and uses of the motion picture.

The National Board is opposed to legal censorship and is in favor of the community better films plan of placing emphasis upon and building support for the finer and more worthwhile films. It is at all times glad to cooperate with any agency to encourage and guide the motion picture in developing its possibilities both as recreation and as entertainment.

It carries on its work through various committees. All members of the committees serve without pay. No member is connected with the motion picture industry. They are representative of varied interests and activities and many are connected with large public welfare organizations or educational institutions.

The General Committee is a body evolved out of the original group organized in 1909. It is the appeal and central advisory committee of the National Board to which policies are referred and to which decisions of the Review Committee regarding pictures may be carried either by the producers or by the Review Committee itself.

The Executive Committee is composed of members of the General Committee and is the directing body of the National Board, charged with the formulation of policies, the election of members, the expenditure of funds and supervision of all administrative affairs.

The Review Committee is a large group of 300 members carrying on the work of reviewing the films. It is divided into sub-groups which meet for review per schedule during each week in the projection rooms of the various motion picture companies.

The Membership Committee supervises the membership list of the Review Committee and recommends the names of proposed new members for consideration by the Executive Committee.

The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays is composed of critics and students of the cinema interested particularly in encouraging the artistic development of the motion picture. It reviews and publishes a critique of the finest films and assists community groups in the showing of unusual films to special audiences. Its pioneer activity has done much to lay the foundation for the Little Photoplay Theatre movement and to stimulate the organization of subscription groups to develop audiences for the support of the creative achievements of the screen.

## NATIONAL MOTION PICTURE COUNCIL

The community or field work of the National Board of Review is conducted under its National Motion Picture Council, through affiliated membership groups, service contact groups and correspondents throughout the country. The National Council assists in the organization and program of work of local groups which are usually called Councils.

These Councils follow a plan initiated by the National Board in 1916 of having a membership composed of representatives from many organizations, cultural, educational, recreational, religious, and civic, so that they typify the original movement for community participation in the development and best use of the motion picture as recreation and education.

The objectives of such organizations are as follows:

To demonstrate through the education of public opinion, the effectiveness of selection and classification, instead of censorship, as a means of forwarding the development of the motion picture and its best uses.

To encourage through open meetings, forums, classes and other means, the study of the motion picture as a medium of entertainment, education and artistic expression.

To concentrate the attention of the public on specific worthwhile films through the publication of a Photoplay Guide to the selected pictures being currently shown at local theatres.

To arrange family Friday night or week-end programs of selected films, and junior matinees of pictures particularly suited to the tastes of children, through cooperation with local exhibitors.

To endorse and further the use of visual education through motion pictures in the schools.

To arrange and promote occasional exhibitions of exceptional and cultural films that would not normally be shown in the commercial theatres.

### PUBLICATIONS

The National Board of Review and its Council as an aid to the groups carrying out these objectives furnishes an informational service through its publications.

#### National Board of Review Magazine (monthly)

\$2.00 a year for individual subscriptions  
\$1.00 a year to Council or club groups

#### Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures

\$2.50 a year when taken alone, available at a special rate of \$1.00 in conjunction with the Magazine.

#### Selected Pictures Catalog (annual) \_\_\_\_\_ 25c

#### Special Film Lists \_\_\_\_\_ 10c ea.

Such as Selected Films for Children's Showings, Selected Book-Films, Educational Films, etc.

#### National Board of Review—Its Background, Growth and Present Status \_\_\_\_\_ free

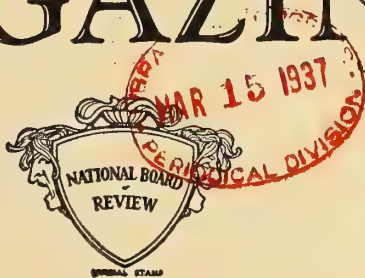
#### National Board of Review—How It Works \_\_\_\_\_ free

#### A Plan and a Program for Community Motion Picture Councils \_\_\_\_\_ 10c

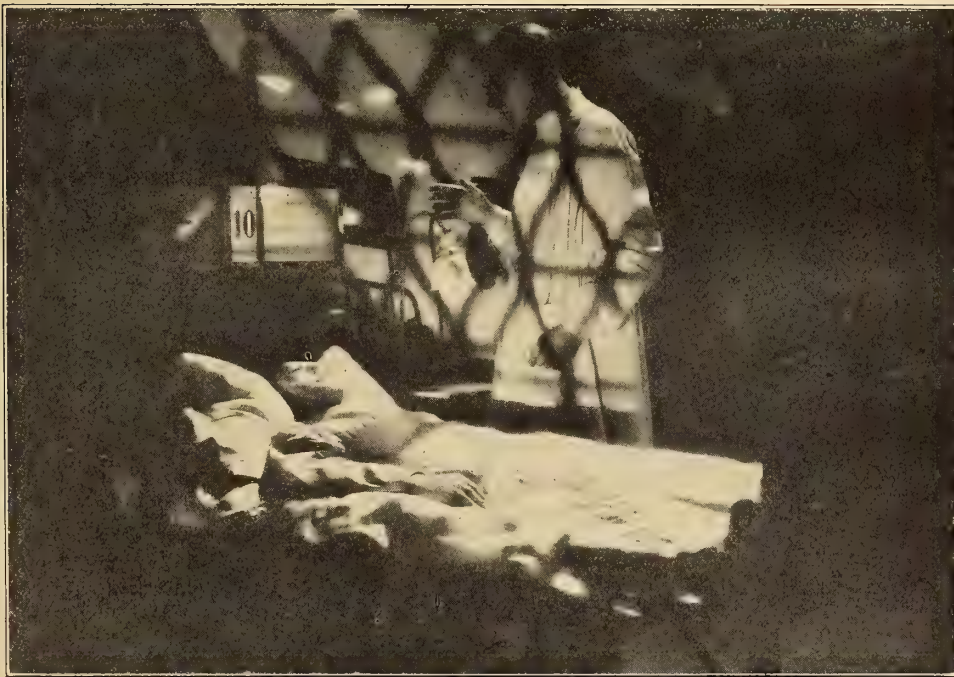


# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

Vol. XII, No. 2



February, 1937



*The doctor confronts his split-off self in "The Eternal Mask" (see page 10)*

*Published monthly, except July and August, by the  
National Board of Review of Motion Pictures*

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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

m \*BLACK LEGION—See Exceptional Photographs Department, page 8.

fj BOLD CABALLERO — Robert Livingston, Heather Angel. Screenplay and direction by Wells Root. A picturesque romance—the old character of Zorro again, the outlaw who befriended the enslaved peons in Spanish California. Done in color. Republic.

f CRACK UP—Peter Lorre, Brian Donlevy, Thomas Beck. Screenplay by John Goodrich. Directed by Malcolm St. Clair. A complicated melodrama of spies and stolen war plans, culminating in an exciting smash-up of an airplane. Peter Lorre gives one of his characteristic performances. 20th Century-Fox.

f \*DEAD MARCH, THE—Continuity by Samuel Taylor Moore. Directed by "Bud" Pollard. With Boake Carter as commentator, this film, almost entirely by the use of newsreels, sketches the war-threatening spots of the world, and follows with talks from the Unknown Soldiers, risen from their graves to tell their parts in the Great War. Impassioned and vigorous, it is one of the most effective of deliberately anti-war propaganda films. Suggested for school, library and church use. Worth being kept permanently available. Harry Sherman.

m DOCTOR'S DIARY, A—John Trent, Helen Burgess. Screenplay by Samuel Ornitz and Joseph Anthony. Directed by Charles Victor. Dramatic story dealing with professional ethics in a fashionable hospital. Interesting and vigorous though it might be

resented by the medical profession. Paramount.

fj DODGE CITY TRAIL — Charles Starrett, Marion Weldon. Screenplay by Harold Shumate. Directed by C. C. Coleman, Jr. Western story of bad men, a hero and a girl, but more interesting than most Westerns and with some very good cowboy singing. Columbia.

f GOD'S COUNTRY AND THE WOMAN—George Brent, Beverly Roberts. Novel by James Oliver Curwood. Directed by William Keighley. The great North woods in Technicolor gives interest to a familiar plot about rival lumber companies, a playboy turned into a he-man, and a scrapping pair of lovers getting reconciled. Warner.

m \*GREEN LIGHT — Errol Flynn, Cedric Hardwicke, Margaret Lindsay. Novel by Lloyd C. Douglas. Directed by Frank Borzage. A story of a young surgeon, in disgrace through taking the blame for another doctor's fault, who risked his life to find the cure for a dangerous fever. Serious and interesting and with a certain inspirational lift to it. Suggested for school, library and church use. First National.

f LARCENY ON THE AIR—Robert Livingston, Grace Bradley. Screenplay by Richard English. Directed by Irving Pichel. The story of a young doctor crusading by radio against harmful patent medicines. It is pretty melodramatic but the idea is good and the actors as well. Republic.

f \*LLOYDS OF LONDON—Freddie Bartholomew, Tyrone Power, Madeleine Carroll. Story by Curtis Kenyon. Directed by Henry King. How a pact made by two boys served in later years to help England weather a national crisis. Picturesque and stirring story of the days of Nelson and the Napoleonic War, and the part played by the great insurance company. Suggested for school and library use. 20th Century-Fox.

m \*MAID OF SALEM—Claudette Colbert, Fred McMurray. Screenplay by Bradley King. Directed by Frank Lloyd. A story of Salem in the days of witchcraft done in a restrained manner. Well acted especially by the children. The costuming and direction excellent. Paramount.

m MAN OF THE PEOPLE—Joseph Calleia, Florence Rice, Ted Healy. Screenplay by Frank Dolan. Directed by Edwin L. Marin. A story of city politics, and a neighborhood boy who became a lawyer and tried to use the organization as a step toward honest law administration. Somewhat romanticized, but a good slant on practical politics and the making of Americans. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

(Continued on page 18)



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# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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February, 1937

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## The Board's Annual Conference

"LOOKING BACKWARD AND FORWARD AT THE MOTION PICTURE"

ANYONE who has to keep in constant and almost daily touch with the motion picture bears more than a slight resemblance to that proverbial person walking in the woods who could not see the forest for the trees. Therefore the Thirteenth Annual Conference of the National Board of Review was in a way a brief trip out of the woods for a look at the whole forest from a little distance, to see how it has grown and what its prevailing characteristics are, and for the travelers to compare notes on individual specimens of trees they have been observing at close range.

The need for such a survey every once in a while is especially obvious with the movies, because to some people they seem to progress with prodigious rapidity, while to others, with apparently just as good reason, they seem to be stationary, even stagnant. It all depends on what is being looked for, and who is doing the looking. For those who want merely quick and easy entertainment the movies are a godsend, and even to the most critical the technical efficiency of present-day studios is something to marvel at. People who have cherished the possibilities of the screen from the beginning, if their enthusiasm still flourishes, see every small advance gratefully, perhaps with sometimes exaggerated optimism. On the other hand for those who—thinking of the dramatic film—look for the motion picture to justify their hopes of it as

an art or as an important interpreter of modern life, with all its spiritual and social problems, the millenium seems a long time in arriving, and some are even so pessimistic as to pray that the screen will content itself with being just a day to day pastime and leave the more serious things to some other form of expression better able, or better conditioned, to handle them.

But these more prevalent films that go into the theatres are far from being all that is important in the motion picture, and the National Board of Review is just as deeply, if not so obviously, concerned with all the increasingly various ways the screen is finding in which to exert its undeniable influence outside the fields either of entertainment or of art. So this Annual Conference, looking backward and forward—at what has been, what is, and what may and can be—was trying to take stock and get a new perspective on the most potent entertainer, educator and civilizer of our day.

This looking back at the past and into the future of the motion picture was done by means of addresses and film showings held during the three conference days, February 4th to 6th.

The luncheon speakers talking on the use of the motion picture in their various fields were: F. Trubee Davison, President of the American Museum of Natural History; Dr. Clarence Cook Little, Managing Direc-

tor of the American Society for the Control of Cancer; Fritz Lang, noted motion picture director; Langdon Post, New York City Tenement House Commissioner; Will Irwin, author; Mrs. Johanna M. Lindlof, New York City Board of Education; Hal Hode, Executive Assistant to the Vice-President of Columbia Pictures Corp.; Eileen Creelman, motion picture critic of the New York Sun.

of Warner Bros. Pictures; "Modern Scouting for Film Talent" by Harry Evans, Eastern Talent Scout of Universal Pictures Corp.; "The Growth of the Newsreel" by Lowell Thomas of Fox Movietone News; "Music and the Films" by Dr. Kurt London, author of "Film Music"; and "The Classroom Film" by Col. Frederick L. Devereaux, Vice-President of Erpi Picture Consultants.



*Notables who took part in the Luncheon program.*

Celebrities of the screen who brought greetings to the Luncheon guests were: Burgess Meredith of *Winterset*, the outstanding R. K. O. picture; Sir Cedric Hardwicke, the English actor, seen here in *Nell Gwyn* and *Peg of Old Drury*; Mr. Friedrich Feher, Viennese actor and director, known for his acting in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligary* and his directing and composing of the current film *The Robber Symphony*; Miss Erin O'Brien-Moore, who plays in the notable Warner film *Black Legion* reviewed in this number of the Magazine.

Subjects and the speakers presenting them at the Conference were: "Old Days in Film Production" by J. Searle Dawley, first officiating director of the Edison Co.; "What Censorship Has Meant and Means," by Pearl Buck; "The Coming of Sound" by Albert S. Howson, Editorial Director

Two evening speaking and demonstration sessions were held, the first in connection with the Motion Picture Course given at New York University School of Education under the auspices of the National Board and the University. Speakers there were Professor Allardyce Nicoll, Department of Drama of Yale University, and Terry Ramsaye, editor of Motion Picture Herald, whose subject was "The Drama of Adolph Zukor" which was represented by contrasted showings of *Queen Elizabeth*, with Sarah Bernhardt, 1912, and *Maid of Salem*, 1937. The other was a Survey of Color with a showing of notable examples of color films both professional and amateur. John V. Hansen, an authority in the latter field, discussed his work in connection with the showing.

*(Continued on page 6)*



## Director Fritz Lang Talks at the Conference Luncheon

*Fritz Lang is one of the world's great directors, whose masterpieces include "Siegfried," "Metropolis," "M" and his American film, "Fury."*

**M**AKING pictures is a very peculiar job. It is something like creating a little world of its own. The creating process starts with an idea and following this idea you can only do something if you have tools. I want to talk a little about the means which we have for creating a picture.

When the moving camera was invented in the last century we got a thing which enabled us to do something absolutely new. I think the greatest genius since the beginning of the moving pictures is the man who found out that he had to do something quite different than what had been done until that moment. The task of the movie cannot be to reproduce something that has been produced before. It cannot be canned theatre. So I think the greatest genius is Walt Disney, who really did something that never had been shown before. We all love Mickey Mouse and the other charming creatures. They are animated so that we really believe that they live. I think it is so great because all their different stories never could be shown in a theatre.

The director when he really tries to do something new has to think about the possibilities he has. And the possibilities are so simple in a certain way that they are very seldom done. I mean this: if you look at a theatre as we are used to on the stage it looks like a room where one wall is off and the audience sits before the wall like peeping Toms and watches everything that is going on. They are only onlookers. Now the creation of the camera helped us to break up this room, to tear it to pieces and put every single member of the audience in the place of the actor. I mean this: when I photograph, for example, two talking actors, I don't photo-

graph them from one angle as an onlooker. I try to photograph them as they see each other and by that simple means I have the possibility of putting the audience into the mind of one of the acting persons. They are no more onlookers, but feel with the person who is on the screen.

We can go farther than that. For example when we show an accident on the stage we hear about it. We never see, let us say, a car accident. We see only the result, the broken car, maybe some people lying around. But what happens in the movie? We create something absolutely new. We create a new art in doing things. We see a car rushing towards the onlooker. The audience immediately feels as if they were driving the car. We are not showing any more that a car crushes against a tree; we show it in a way that we bring you in the situation of the driver. We show maybe a road which hurries towards you. You see the trees on both sides of the road hurrying toward the car without seeing the car. The audience should be put, I repeat, in the situation of the actor who drives this car. And then when we give, for example, an explosion, you have the feeling as if you were driving this car. It is one thing that the theatre cannot do and which we try to do now.

But we can go still a step farther. I believe that it would be possible to photograph the feelings of a person. An actor has only a certain limit in his expressions, and this doesn't mean to belittle an actor. We help him with what we call a close-up, that is a magnified face, but he has to tell what he feels. Now if we want we will be able to photograph feelings. I tried it once in such a way in a picture called *Metropolis*, a long time ago. A man felt very badly. He felt that everything around him had vanished. The floor started to move. He couldn't stand any more on his feet. I photographed big bubbles of soap

which appeared before his eyes. Not a star, but a flash of light and suddenly darkness. And when he awoke he was in a hospital. I tried to photograph his feelings. And I believe very much that we can improve this that I call the photography of the mind—of the brain—when we have color. A lot of people don't believe that color will improve pictures but I think color will improve very much when we use it at a dramatic point and not only to photograph something which is very colorful, like a desert, or green trees or flowers, but if we can use color as a dramatic climax as we use now, in a certain comparison, music. I mean that we will detect sometimes that certain colors develop certain emotions in us. And if we use this, we are one step farther toward something absolutely new.

In this development, it is not only the script which should be improved. This should be improved to make a moving picture use the means which we have and which cannot be shown by other means. To do this we need one help and that help is our audience. It is always very difficult to do something new. We have to do it very slowly. And I am very proud and very happy that I can talk to you here because

I haven't forgotten, and will never forget, that one of my pictures, *M*, was shown here under the protection of the National Board of Review. I am very proud naturally. They tell me it was a very good picture. But your help can do more here than only telling that you like such a picture. I personally think, for example, that just now in America it is very important to do again such a picture as *M* because I just came from the Coast and there was a terrible kidnapping crime in Tacoma. Now we are handicapped by certain rulings. If we did make a kidnapping picture, I personally think it would be very important and very interesting for the government to show not how such a kidnapping is done, but what mothers, what fathers should do if such a case really happened, their relationship to the government, their relationship to every person who is against this kidnapping racket. But we can't do it, it is simply impossible for us because of censorship to make such a picture.

This National Board of Review, I know, is fighting for everything that we are fighting for and I can only thank you all in the name of the men who are working for the same goals which you have.

## The Board's Annual Conference

(Continued from page 4)

Pictures discussed, were *The Eternal Mask* by Dr. A. A. Brill, at the opening session of the Conference at the Belmont Theatre; films taken by Alan Villiers on a recent 'round the world voyage on the Joseph Conrad; *Posture and Locomotion* in the Child Psychology Series, by Dr. Alice V. Keliher, Chairman Commission on Human Relations, Progressive Education Association; *The Seeing Eye*, introduced by Miss Gretchen Green; a composite film representing the activity of the Harmon Foundation, Division of Visual Experiment, by Miss Mary B. Brady, Director; *Shakespeare* from the Gaumont-British Visual Education Dept.; three three-minute films, *Astronomy*, *Pacific Problem* and *Abys-*

*sinia*, introduced by Mr. Jean H. Lenauer, President of Lenauer International Films, and *Mechanisms of Breathing* from Erpi.

Two sessions were devoted to the activities of the Young Reviewers and the 4-Star Clubs. Reports on club activities and talks on "My Movie Likes and Dislikes," "Jacksonville's Hollywood Reporter," "Difficulties of a Producer," "My 4 Years as a Reviewer," "School Library Cinema Exhibit" and "Movies Abroad" marked the speaking session of the juniors, while the other was a review and discussion of *On the Avenue*, the new Twentieth Century-Fox film.

The various addresses will be printed in the Magazine, two appearing in this issue and others to come, giving those not in attendance a chance to hear the message of these talks and those in attendance a record of them.



# The Motion Picture in the Museum

By THE HON. F. TRUBEE DAVISON  
*President, American Museum of Natural History*

*Address delivered at the Twenty-second Annual Luncheon of the National Board of Review, February 6th, 1937.*

ONE does not have to be an expert to appreciate the tremendous force that the motion picture is throughout the world, and particularly in contemporary American life.

The organization with which I am connected, the American Museum of Natural History, does use and has used for over a quarter of a century the motion picture in various phases of its work. And instead of going into a long discussion of that problem, I am going to simply present to you a situation that has come up to me as President of the Museum within the last two or three weeks, which, if it was accurately stated to me and I properly transmit it to you, is to me a very interesting one and a very significant one. Before I state it I must give you one or two words as background.

I say that for a quarter of a century the Museum has used the motion picture, and used it intensively. We have built up an extensive reference library relating to natural history and the natural sciences in general. Then, of course, not in a commercial way but in our own line of work, we have produced a great many pictures for educational and scientific purposes.

It is in regard to a third usage that the situation arises to which I wish to refer. We have attempted to distribute, on a fairly large scale, pictures throughout the nation for educational purposes. I don't recall the detailed figures, but we have carried on this operation in some forty-two states, all the states of the Union except the Pacific states. And the work that has been done through the medium of the pictures I think

anybody will agree has been important. I hope that it has been interesting.

The problem that has come up to me that is so intensely interesting and significant if the facts as presented are correct, is this:

Very recently the Curator of our Department of Education came to me and said in relation to the distribution of these educational films, that as a result of a preliminary study he had made, he believed that the industry itself and other agencies were producing so many fine pictures in the fields in which we were particularly concerned that it would probably no longer be necessary for the Museum to continue this work of distribution in the elementary schools, high schools, junior colleges and universities. Just let your mind dwell on that point for a minute to appreciate its significance. Is it possible that today the demands from the public through educational institutions have reached such a point that the industry is now distributing pictures which will satisfy not only popular and commercial demands but in addition to that, the requirements of those primarily concerned with education?

I for one profoundly hope that it is true and if it is true it is unquestionably due in no small measure to the work that has been done by this organization.



# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS

## DEPARTMENT

*This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of Exceptional and Honorable*

*Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.*

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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## Black Legion

*Adapted by Abem Finkel and William Wister Haines from a story by Robert Lord; directed by Archie Mayo; photographed by George Barnes; produced and distributed by Warner Bros.*

### The cast

Frank Taylor	.....	Humphrey Bogart
Ruth Taylor	.....	Erin O'Brien-Moore
Ed Jackson	.....	Dick Foran
Betty Grogan	.....	Ann Sheridan
Mike Grogan	.....	Clifford Soubier
Pearl Danvers	.....	Helen Flint
Cliff Moore	.....	Joseph Sawyer
Brown	.....	Robert Barrat
Prosecuting Attorney	.....	Addison Richards
Judge	.....	Samuel Hinds
Metcalfe	.....	Eddie Acuff
Billings	.....	Paul Harvey
Tommy Smith	.....	John Litel

**B**LACK LEGION is one of those rare films in which what is behind the scarelines of newspapers comes home with a bang. It is about those secret gangs, bound together by blood-curdling oaths of fellowship and loyalty, who operate in darkness, hooded and masked, taking the law into their own hands and attempting to create a new order of things through terrorization. It is based specifically, and with almost reportorial accuracy, on the case in the middle West that was forced out into the light just a few months ago; but its greatest importance as a film comes not from its truthful reporting of a single actual case, but from the fact, which it illuminates so devastatingly, that such a case is not single and isolated but typical, something always likely to come along again.

History is full of plots to upset governments and change existing social and politi-

cal orders. Under a despot or a dictator they are inevitable, and secrecy is necessary—Brutus could not fight against Caesar's usurpation of power except in secret, and only in secret could the first Ku Klux Klan fight against the unbearable tyranny of the carpetbag politicians in the murky days after the South's military subjugation and the assassination of Lincoln. Obviously the only way to fight the Czar in old Russia was by secret organization, just as today only secret organizations can work against Stalin and Mussolini and Hitler. But in a democratic country the battle against wrong and injustice can be fought in the open—it has to be if any permanent victory is to be gained. The fight may be long and slow, with ignorance and indifference on the side of the enemy, but life would be intolerable if one could not believe that human beings, given a chance to know and understand the issues involved, are in the long run guided by reason.

So it is impossible, in this country, when an organization works for its aims in darkness and secrecy, not to suspect that there is something in it that will not bear the light of day. Their allies are ignorance, prejudice, intolerance, selfishness and fear, and the things they are most afraid of are open discussion and enlightened reasoning.

*Black Legion* illustrates this, but even more alarmingly it illustrates how rather simple men, not particularly educated or mature in mind, whose serious concern is mostly to give their families comfortable homes—content enough to work if they feel secure in their jobs—can be worked upon,





*Humphrey  
Bogart as  
the mechanic  
who joined  
the Black Legion.*

warped and deluded by the Black Legion kind of organizations. Frank Taylor, in this picture, is just an ordinary man with a wife and kid, mentally not much older than his small son (not because he is stupid but because his mind has never been much awakened), good enough at his job but not the kind who thinks much of his job outside working hours or tries to fit himself by study for something better, satisfied with the ordinary chances of promotion and interested in baseball, the newspaper funnies, movies, radio—the easy entertainments that require no mental participation. His idea of a better way of living is to be able to buy a better car, and to give his wife better clothes and a fine vacuum cleaner and his son a new baseball bat.

An ordinary working man. And when his hopes of promotion are disappointed, instead of seeing why a better man got the

job he was counting on he becomes sore, and an easy pushover for the talk that the country is being overrun by dirty foreigners who are stealing the very bread from decent and honest and hardworking Americans. He joins the legion believing that it is a way to protect his home and family, and he enjoys it at first, the boyish way men enjoy lodges and secret societies. But when his personal rancor against the man who beat him out for the job of foreman has been satisfied, and the brutal and bloody methods of the legion begin to worry him, it is too late to back out. The terrible oath of loyalty and secrecy binds him and he is afraid to break it. Eventually he has to help kill a man, and that killing results in an exposure of the whole gang. Even then, by helping in a carefully built-up lie as a defense, he could escape punishment. But he is not a villain—he is a victim—and what is honest and decent in him finally

revolts, and he makes a full confession. It sends him to prison for life. Yet he never seems so much a man as when he goes out of the courtroom to begin that long sentence.

The picture is stunningly produced—the writing of it, the directing, the acting (particularly that of Humphrey Bogart). But even more important than its fine artistic qualities is the kind of thing it is. Propaganda, undoubtedly, but the propaganda of truth-telling. Not so much about secret legions, black or other colors—they always get exposed and broken up before they can do anything really cataclysmic—as about the kind of short-sighted, uninformed, well-enough-meaning men who have to be given an understanding of what democracy really is so that they will not go on and on providing tools for such legions. It is the kind of thing that those who are looking for social significance in the movies can get behind and boost to the limit. And that is just what they ought to do. It is one of the best expositions of what genuine Americanism is and is not that the screen has produced.—J. S. H.

*Rated exceptional.*

## The Eternal Mask

*Adapted by Leo Lapaire from his novel of the same title; directed by Werner Hochbaum; photographed by Oscar Schnirch; art direction by Hans Jakoby; musical score by Anton Profes, played by the Vienna Philharmonic Society. Produced by Progress Films, Berne, Switzerland; distributed by Arthur Mayer and Joseph Burstyn.*

### The cast

Doctor Dumartin .....	Mathias Wieman
Professor Tscherko .....	Peter Petersen
Doctor Wendt .....	Tom Kraa
Adam Negar .....	Franz Schafheitlin
Frau Negar .....	Olga Tschechowa
Sister Anna .....	Thekla Ahrens

**M**OVIES that try to picture psychiatry and mental cases usually run into trouble by getting too complicated in their stories and relations of characters, with results that are largely superficial as well as puzzling or incredible. *The Eternal Mask* has the great virtue of a simple outline of plot and few characters, and by

that means becomes not only comprehensible in its subject matter but highly effective in its drama. It does not lean heavily on dialogue to put over its meaning, so that with the comparatively few English titles that are superimposed on the film those who do not understand German can follow things quite easily.

The story tells of a young doctor in a hospital who has given his whole skill and energy to working out a serum to cure meningitis. Finding that cure has been his life. He believes he has found it, but he has never tried it on a human being. At length there is a patient given up by all the other doctors as a hopeless case. Why, since there is no other chance for him, shouldn't Doctor Dumartin's serum be tried? But the head of the hospital refuses permission for such an experiment. In spite of this the doctor gets the consent of the patient's wife and gives him the forbidden injection. The patient rallies, his pain is gone—then suddenly he dies. The man's wife, in her grief, calls the doctor a murderer. A great scandal spreads, that irresponsible if not intentionally criminal things are going on in the hospital, and Doctor Dumartin is in disgrace. He wanders about the city, haunted by imaginary taunts and accusations, a feeling of guilt cutting so deeply into him that something happens to his mind. In a portfolio he carries is the formula for his serum. Crossing a bridge over a stream he sees his own reflection in the water, but he objectifies it as something outside himself—as a part of himself outside himself, the doctor part of him that murdered a patient; and he hurls his portfolio with the formula in it into the water at the reflection, shouting that Doctor Dumartin shall do no more killing. Then he jumps into the water. He is rescued, and identified by a card in his pocket, but for himself his identity is gone.

Meantime an autopsy has proved that it was not the serum that killed the patient, and the hospital authorities, fighting against the harmful rumors in circulation, have come to have such belief in Dr. Dumartin's cure that the hospital head is willing to put it to a test himself and prove to the world that



the ugly scandal is false. But the formula is gone, and Dr. Dumartin, suffering from the delusion that he is not Dr. Dumartin, that Dr. Dumartin is lost, cannot give it to them. So he must be cured, not only for his own sake but to save the good repute of the hospital.

Up to here the film has been an engrossing story of a doctor's failure and its profound effect on his mind. From here on it is a story of his cure, of an older and newer school of psychiatric practice, one contending he is hopelessly insane, the other that he is curable if he can be guided to cure himself. It is a fascinating story, told with remarkable skill by the camera. There is some over-simplification about it to the expert in such things, but the simplification is necessary for dramatic clarity and essentially sticks to sound professional knowledge of the facts of split personality. The astonishing thing about it is that so excellent a movie could have been made on so difficult a subject—and that makes it almost superfluous to say that pictorially, in its direction and acting, in all the respects that good movie making calls for, it is first rate. Not that only—it also proves that we need no longer think we have to be satisfied with inadequate treatment of such subjects under the delusion that they are beyond the scope of the motion picture. *The Eternal Mask* shows they can be done as they should be.

J. S. H.

*Rated exceptional*

## Dr. Brill's Comments

*The following talk, given at the Conference showing of "The Eternal Mask," presents an expert professional opinion of the film, given by Dr. A. A. Brill, one of the most distinguished psychiatrists in America.*

YOU just saw this very interesting film, but the remarks that I am going to make have nothing to do with its qualities, I was asked to discuss the psychiatric aspects of the case.

But in order to give you clear comprehension I will have to tell you something about the normal development of the human

mind, and about the conditions which lead to splitting of personality or schizophrenia.

When the child comes into the world he or she brings along a simple, neutral, and comparatively speaking, an unorganized or lawless mentality. As he grows older the mind undergoes definite changes as a result of new impressions. These impressions come from experiences which the child constantly receives from his environment. As time goes on the chaotic and lawless infantile mind becomes more or less tamed and organized. The child soon finds out that he cannot do everything that his lawless instincts prompt. The part of the mind which comes in direct contact with the world, the ego, becomes hardened, and so to speak, conscious of what is good or bad for the individual. The primitive instincts always remain, but the ego curbs them and allows them expression only under special conditions. At the age of four or five the average child already possesses shame, sympathy, disgust and morality, that is, most of the primitive instincts have been repressed, and what is allowed to function is adequately controlled. But no matter how good an ego one develops which tells him what is good for him and what is bad for him, the individual is still no better than the higher animals which, too, develop a good ego organization. However, man goes a step higher as time goes on the ego becomes modified into what we call a super-ego or conscience. Once this height is attained, acts are no longer judged solely by whether they are good or bad for the person, but by whether they are right or wrong. Henceforth if a primitive instinct craves for expression it is no longer a question whether one can do it with impunity, but whether one has a moral right to do it. In the average person it always results in a conflict which the individual solves to the satisfaction of society. In the sensitive or neurotic person such conflicts may lead to a splitting of personality.

The two maladies mentioned in this film are splitting of personality and schizophrenia. Let me say right here that the latter, too, involves a splitting of personality, for schizophrenia means an insanity due to splitting.

But these two mental disturbances differ materially in their development and prognosis. Schizophrenia is a chronic form of insanity which rarely, if ever, ends in recovery, while ordinary splitting of personality is not as serious and is usually curable. The object of the treatment is to form a union between the split off parts of the mind.

As an example of a simple splitting of personality I will cite the following case. A man lost his right arm through an accident. For a number of weeks he was quite ill suffering from an infection of the wound, but when he finally recovered from the shock he showed the following state. He was unconscious of the loss of his arm, and when his attention was forcibly directed to the fact that he had only one arm, tears rolled down his face, and he stared in front of him, and said: "Poor fellow, look at him, he has only one arm!" In other words, he saw himself as another person and pitied himself. His personality, as it were, was split because he could not resign himself to the reality of the sad situation, namely, that he had lost his right arm. One observes similar situations as a result of moral conflicts, but the symptoms naturally look different.

Ordinary splitting of personality is always the result of a sudden shock while the splitting in schizophrenia is gradual and slow in development. It takes years of gradual splitting before a schizophrenic is recognized as insane by the average layman.

As represented in the picture, Dr. Dumartin did not seem to be a schizophrenic. He did not show the type of personality which develops this disease. The professor diagnosed him as a schizophrenic because he seemed to have hallucinations, that is, because he saw himself as a separate personality. However, he was not different from the patient I cited who acted this way for a longer time than Dumartin. Dr. Wendt, who represented the new school, was quite right in calling Dr. Dumartin a case of split personality due to a personal conflict. The mode of recovery surely speaks for this milder disturbance. The conflict was

between his primitive need for expression, which is a sublimated form of exhibitionism, and the rigid prohibition of his chief who represented his superego. For the latter is nothing but the embodiment of the prohibition and commands which are implanted into the child by the father. Having disobeyed his chief, or the father, he was severely punished for it, but instead of accepting it with humility he ran away from the painful situation, and finally tore himself away from all reality. This could only be accompanied by some sort of splitting. But his conscience pursued him everywhere, he felt guilty and hence had a need for punishment which he finally expiates through his suicidal attempt.

I think that the picture was overdone in one place and under-done in another. The authors put everything that one sees in such mental cases into this one picture. Thus, the dancing girls which Dumartin sees in the cafe, and later in his delirium, were undoubtedly meant to represent the erotic element which frequently plays a part in such disturbances; one does not, however, see it plainly in all such cases. The treatment as depicted here is the worse part of the presentation judging it psychiatrically. The average onlooker gets the impression that it took about half an hour or so to cure Dumartin. The fact of the matter is that it takes months and sometimes longer to cure such a case. To unite the split off elements is not so simple as the authors make one believe. I feel that they could have shown in some way that in actual practice such treatment consumes more time than is here shown.

What purposes such a production serves is a question. For many years efforts have been made by the movies to show the mental operations of cases of nervousness and insanity. I have seen a number of them, and it is my opinion that none ever succeeded in depicting the true situation of a mental disturbance. It seems to me the authors have tried hard to represent the denouements of the case as one reads about such mechanisms in psychiatric works, but they have not succeeded. I doubt whether the average person in the audience could



follow understandably the delirium and confusion as shown here in the disease and in the recovery. The object of any performance is to give the audience a vicarious outlet by way of identification. I do not think that *The Eternal Mask* did this successfully.

It would perhaps be better if the movies showed the funny side of mental cases, as is done so much nowadays on the stage, where the psychiatrist is belittled and ridiculed, instead of depicting the true state as is attempted in *The Eternal Mask*.



Greta Garbo and Robert Taylor in "Camille"

## Camille

Screenplay by Zoe Akins, Frances Marion and James Hilton; from the play "La Dame aux Camélias" by Alexandre Dumas, Fils; directed by George Cukor; photographed by William Daniels and Karl Freund; music by Herbert Stothart; sets by Cedric Gibbons; gowns by Adrian. Produced and distributed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

### The cast

Marguerite Gautier .....	Greta Garbo
Armand Duval .....	Robert Taylor
Baron de Varville .....	Henry Daniell
Duval Sr. ....	Lionel Barrymore
Nichette .....	Elizaeth Allan
Nanine .....	Jessie Ralph
Olympe .....	Lenore Ulric
Prudence .....	Laura Hope Crews
Gaston .....	Rex O'Malley
Gustave .....	Russell Hardie
St. Gaudens .....	E. E. Clive
Henri .....	Douglas Walton

NOW and then a film comes along which nearly all the critics acclaim, nearly all the intelligentsia admire, practically all the multitudes of the film audience line up in long queues waiting their turn to see, and so everyone is made happy and the causes of art and mammon are celebrated with one trumpet blast of victory. Such a picture, contrary to the dissenting voice of a few very pernicky ones, may be art. This production of *Camille* is, and not altogether alone because of the sumptuously human, moving performance of Miss Greta Garbo, a performance hardly equaled, never exceeded in the history of the screen.

So much has already been written in praise of Miss Garbo and this picture, and will have been written by the time this review is printed—by critics distinguished and undistinguished alike—that it is exceedingly difficult to get fresh bearings on the merits, and a few demerits, of the production. In face of the spate of eulogy, of the tremendous response of the mass public, one might begin by cocking one's head, pursing one's mouth, and enquiring of one's self, "Isn't it all too good to be true? Isn't there, maybe, something just a little the matter with this glittering and abundant film?" The present reviewer, asking himself this question once again, reaches again the answer, "No, no." For this *Camille*, done from the book and the play of Dumas fils (long considered by the cognoscenti in such matters, to have been even in the heyday of their popularity, and when the latter was given a sort of early immortality by the great and divine actresses Bernhardt and Duse, no better than creaking, meretricious tear-squeezers), comes alive, fluid and genuinely compelling, valid as a cinematic rendering of living people and the time in which they lived, as well as showing the progress of a life, of a gay, tender and bitter briefness, moving to the gradually hushing note of splendid, futile wings.

Thus *Camille* has the charm of giving out something that is documentary, which greatly enhances the atmosphere of reality. Through all its long, splendid scenes with their variety and feeling of what must have been the Paris of the times—the springtide streets, the gilded glittering rooms, the spacious opera, the ornateness, extravagance and over-crowded luxury of the places and haunts of the life of joy, it steadily builds up the impression of being a spectacle of manners and fashions, and so a socially true background for its characters to move against. It makes one think of Anna Sten and *Nana*, and how that film, with material so much richer, so much more dramatic as sociology, similar too in the world with which it dealt and with a leading character whose counterparts Zola had studied down to their polished finger-nails, so utterly failed in giving one the feeling either of

reality or importance. But *Camille*, the thing of sometimes tinselly fiction and romantic effulgence, becomes in this production, so far superior to the sappy, plushy *Camilles* that clutter here and there the path of the screen, attains the moving dignity of the authentic.

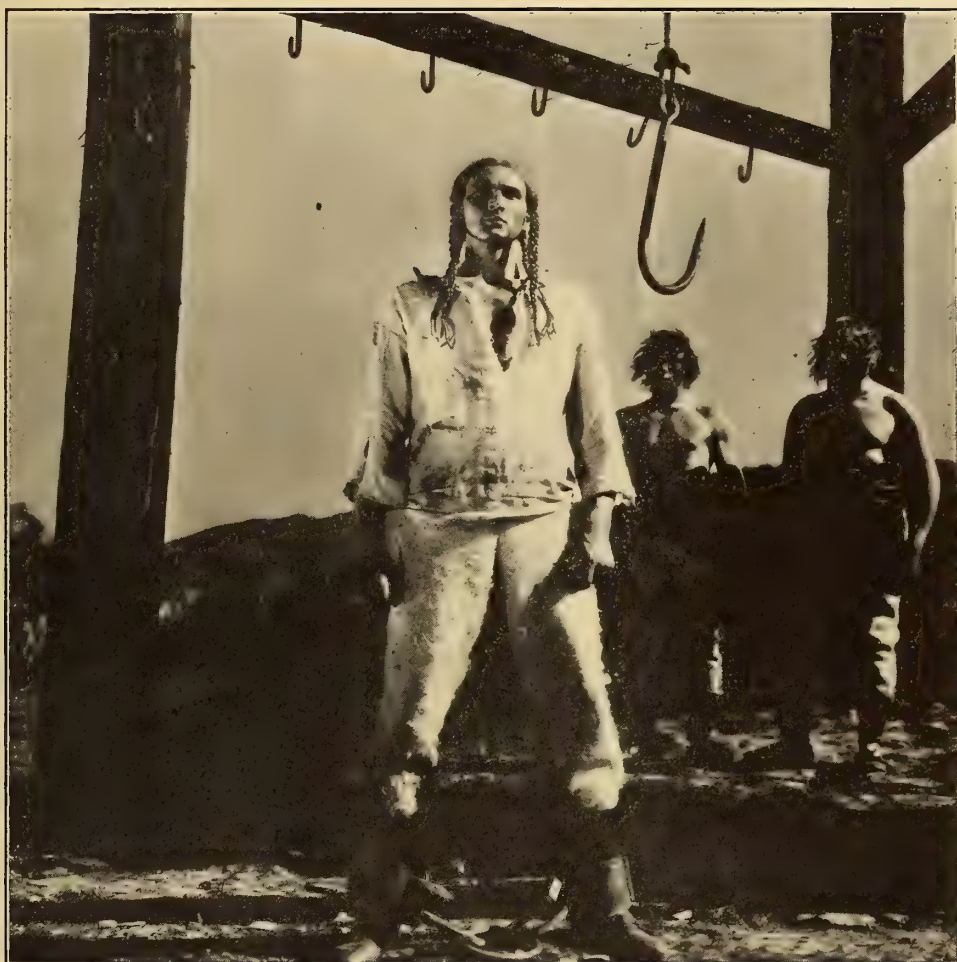
Of *Camille* we come to know, old-fashioned though it may be, if it is, that it has the vitality of a love story powerful enough to give us an increased understanding of the human heart, directed somehow to a new understanding of ourselves as not such hard-boiled creatures, after all, of a new steel-clad, rational day. Indeed we may see in this old baggage of tragic romance something of the glamorous, the tawdry and the sad in the perspective of what we are pleased to call life.

Aside from a few individual performances that seem to be a bit on the overdone and raucous side among those playing roles of the demi-monde who are the companions of the Lady of the Camellias in the vicissitudinous, glittering purloins of her half world, one of the great virtues of the film is that it never softens the shabby, mercenary morality of that world. *Camille*, the slowly dying, so beautifully conveyed by Garbo, was not a good little girl, as she admonishes Armand at her party when inebriation reaches high and the guests begin to whisper their risqué stories around the messed and lavish table. It is because *Camille* has been kept what she is that her purity as her love for Armand deepens rises in an even purer flame even while the candle that sustains it is burning down.

There is particular reason to praise Robert Taylor for his manly Armand, Henry Daniell for his brilliant, sadistic Baron, Lionel Barrymore for his subdued and human elder Duval, and Rex O'Malley for his sympathetic and loyal fop, Gaston. As for Garbo, it should be reiterated that, in giving verity and loveliness so lavishly to her role, she has realized completely the task of a great actress—the greatest actress of her day.—W. A. B.

*Rated exceptional.*





*The heroic climax of "Janosik."*

## Janosik

*Written by J. Mahlen; directed by Mac Fric; photographed by F. Pecenka; music by Milos Smatek. A Lloyd Film Production; distributed by French Motion Picture Corporation.*

### *The cast*

<i>Janosik</i> .....	<i>Palo Bielik</i>
<i>Anichka</i> .....	<i>Zlata Hajdukova</i>
<i>Janicko</i> .....	<i>Filip Davidik</i>
<i>Sandor</i> .....	<i>Andres Bagar</i>

**T**HIS Czech film, with its exteriors made among the mountains of Czechoslovakia, has the charm and freshness of a folk-tale—as it should, being one.

The perennial fascination of Robin Hood, plus a bit of Paul Bunyan's more-than-human kind of exploits, give it a sort of familiarity in its strange setting. It is the tale of a man who once actually lived among the Carpathian Mountains in the early eighteenth century. He became a national hero, and legends grew about him.

Janosik was the son of a poor peasant, a happy young man about to marry. The peasants were cruelly oppressed by the feudal lords, under the rule of the Hapsburgs and young Janosik's whole life was changed by a sudden trouble his father got into, resulting in the old man's arrest and

death from brutal treatment. That tragedy of injustice drove Janosik to a vow of vengeance upon the oppressive lords, and he betook himself to a hiding place in the mountains, where peasants and shepherds and mountaineers rallied around him and formed a band with him as their chieftain. It was a merry band, that soon became notorious through the countryside, descending upon the castles and towns to harass and rob the arrogant rich. All that they stole went to the poor, to make up to them for the crushing burdens put upon them by their over-lords.

But at length Janosik was trapped and condemned to death by hanging. On the gallows—where a huge iron hook stuck beneath his ribs was to be the means of hanging—his judges, knowing Janosik's great power over the people and the strength of his band of followers, offered to spare his life if he would consent to lead his men against the Turks. But he would not consent, and be a help to further oppression. All through his bandit-career he had joked about his end upon the gallows, and once he had got a promise from some musicians that they would come and play for him at his hanging. They kept their promise, and when he heard their music he burst into a wild song and dance of defiance against his captors, and leaped upon the fatal hook. His end was as heroic as his life had been.

This tale has been filmed with a strange and unusual beauty. It is permeated with a legendary feeling—Janosik, superbly played by Palo Bielik, is a lovable man and also more than a man: at times he seems to enlarge, even physically, to heroic proportions, doing gigantic things that are more than human. There is a lot of gaiety and merriment in the picture, as well as savage brutality mingled with its simple sentiments and loyalties, and throughout a fine and exciting spirit of romantic adventure. The music—folk singing and dancing—helps enormously to sustain its tone, the actors are vivid and fascinating, and the setting, with its wild strange mountains gives it an other-world atmosphere that is peculiarly effective.

J. S. H.

*Rated exceptional.*

## Revolutionists

*Directed by Vera Stroyeva; produced by Mosfilm; distributed by Amkino.*

### The cast

<i>Alexander Mikhailov</i>	<i>V. V. Shchukin</i>
<i>Evgeny Svetlov</i>	<i>N. P. Khmelev</i>
<i>Sofia Morozova</i>	<i>K. I. Tarasova</i>
<i>Varvara Postnikova</i>	<i>V. P. Maretskaya</i>
<i>Andreika</i>	<i>V. R. Soloviev</i>

IN the past few years too many films out of Russia have been none too dexterous variations on the Eisenstein-Pudovkin formula for revolution, with Eisenstein and Pudovkin eliminated. *Revolutionists*, however, harks back to the great Russian tradition, a historical piece with the old zest and a fresh imagination.

The film is the first solo work of a woman director still under thirty, Vera Stroyeva, co-director of the earlier *Petersburg Nights*, based on Dostoyevsky. Her current film has the same slightly nostalgic note that distinguished the Dostoyevsky piece, but with a sturdier revolutionary logic and the deeper stride of historic deeds in their happening.

In the outworn, disabused press-agent's phrase, *Revolutionists* is really an "epic" as *Maid of Salem* and *The Plainsman* are not. For it gives you history unbowdlerized, a grim, lusty and yet occasionally tender panorama that seems as empty of theatre as it is quick with life.

These revolutionists are none of them "personalities," glycerine-eyed heroines to whom history defers. They seem the very anonymous men and women they play, those sturdy impassioned romantics who, in the early years of the century, forsook their classes in philosophy, their playing of Chopin and Liszt, and the gardens of Eugene Onegin for the honor of revolutionary death via the salt mines of Siberia or the workers' barricades of St. Petersburg.

The first series of Russian revolutionary films cast up history on the screen in pure mass formation. But Vera Stroyeva's film is a latter day concept, bereft of symbols and abstractions, and full of men and women, either beautiful or misshapen, with



talents or cancers at heart, who never looked back on their personal annihilation for the chance to bring another generation to freedom.

One must, of necessity, mention the actors, V. V. Shchukin, Khmelev, Tarasova, Soloviev, Maretskaya, and the rest who give these revolutionists their animus. Yet the film is above all a director's film, the thing that sets it apart from so many other well acted Russian films that one never remembers after. Stroyeva has never once let the personal chronicle delay history or the revolution stand still for a close-up. Yet she has given it all the personal cast of her own imagination, her own impress, a sort of post-revolutionary flowering of the cinema mind that marks it off from a bare realistic document into aesthetic creation.

E. G.

*Rated honorable mention.*

## The Robber Symphony

*Written, composed and directed by Friedrich Feher; photographed by Eugene Schufftan; produced and distributed by Fortune Film Corporation.*

### *The cast*

<i>The Grandfather</i> .....	<i>George Graves</i>
<i>The Mother</i> .....	<i>Magda Sonja</i>
<i>Giannino, her boy</i> .....	<i>Hans Feher</i>
<i>The Innkeeper</i> .....	<i>Alexandre Rignault</i>
<i>The Man with the Straw Hat</i>	
	<i>Michael Martin-Harvey</i>
<i>The Waitress</i> .....	<i>Tela-Tcham</i>
<i>The Singer</i> .....	<i>Webster Booth</i>
<i>The Clarinet Player</i> .....	<i>Al Marshall</i>
<i>The Bassoon Player</i> .....	<i>Jack Tracy</i>
<i>The Chief Gendarme</i> .....	<i>Oscar Asche</i>
<i>The Magistrate</i> .....	<i>Ivor Wilmot</i>
<i>The Fortune-Teller</i> .....	<i>Vinette</i>
<i>The Charcoal-Burner</i> .....	<i>Jim Gerald</i>
<i>The Mayor</i> .....	<i>Georges Andre Martin</i>

THIS is an unusual film, an ideal film in the sense that it was both conceived and executed by one man—Friedrich Feher. Many people have said that one of the great troubles with movies is that too many minds and hands are involved in the making of them, and that they can never be the product of one man's genius as a book, a symphony, a painting or statue, are. Here Herr Feher has had his own way, writing the story, directing the picture and composing the music for it, and

the music was a large part of his design, as a means even more important than dialogue in delineating not only the action, but the mood, of the story.

The story has a fairy-tale air to it, though it is about real people with no supernatural element. Its plot is simple—strolling musicians, a robbery, the concealment of stolen gold in a hurdy-gurdy piano, and the attempts of the robbers to get their stolen booty back. A boy is its real hero, with his piano and dog and donkey, and the pursuit of him through snowy Alpine mountains is the main action and excitement. At the end the robbers are foiled and the boy gets the reward for their capture.

The film is not only an experiment but an achievement. It must have been made over some period of time, and in various places—three different English studios, and for its outdoor scenes in the High Alps of France, the mountains of the Tyrol and the Mer de Glace of Mont Blanc. That gives some unevenness to its photographic values, but the important thing about it is its true cinematic quality. It could never in the world have been anything but a motion picture, and Herr Feher's attempt to integrate his film action with music is highly successful. Rarely, except in Rene Clair comedies and Walt Disney cartoons, has music been given a chance to play so vital a part in a motion picture.

J. S. H.

*Rated honorable mention.*

MR. FEHER, in speaking at the Board's Luncheon said, "In *Robber Symphony* I have tried to produce the film without a love story, without sex, without gangsters, without fat comics, a picture where the music and story are like twins. This picture will show you that a simple fairy story can give a certain entertainment to the public.

"In *Robber Symphony* you have no more than 384 spoken words. The music and sound effects explain to you the story very well. Every gesture of an actor, every new action starts with the first note in a bar, so that the music gives you the impression of talking."

## Selected Pictures Guide

(Continued from page 2)

- m** **MEN ARE NOT GODS**—Miriam Hopkins, Gertrude Lawrence, Sebastian Shaw. Screenplay and direction by Walter Reisch. How a girl's falling in love with a popular actor nearly caused a tragedy. Made in England, it has good London atmosphere, good actors, and an interesting plot. United Artists.
- 
- fj** **MIGHTY TREVE, THE**—Noah Beery, Jr., Barbara Read. Story by Albert Payson Terhune. Directed by Lewis D. Collins. The story of a shepherd dog who wins his way into the hearts of everyone. Good for "Be Kind to Animals" Week. Universal.
- 
- f** **MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS**—Charles Ruggles, Alice Brady. Story by John Francis Larkin. Directed by Norman Z. McLeod. An amusing story of a timid newspaper columnist who becomes a sensation when he and his wife are kidnapped. Well acted and thoroughly entertaining. Paramount.
- 
- m** **\*RIVER OF UNREST**—John Lodge, John Loder. Play "The Trouble" by Dudley Sturrock and Noel Scott. Directed by Brian Desmond Hurst and Walter Summers. A dramatic incident in the fighting between the Black-and-Tans and the Sinn Feinners in Ireland in the early '20s. Vigorous and tense, with fine atmosphere and national types. The title is little indication to the kind of picture it is. Gaumont-British.
- 
- fj** **\*ROBBER SRMPHONY, THE**—See Exceptional Photoplays Department, page 17.
- 
- f** **SECRET VALLEY**—Richard Arlen, Virginia Grey, Willie Fung. Story by Harold Bell Wright. Directed by Howard Bretherton. A Western of the better sort, with natural cowboys. 20th Century-Fox.
- 
- m** **SHE'S DANGEROUS**—Tala Birell, Walter Pidgeon. Screenplay by Murray Roth. Directed by Lewis Foster. Implicated in a murder, a girl detective is saved from the electric chair at the last moment by a clever trick. Universal.
- 
- m** **STOLEN HOLIDAY**—Kay Francis, Ian Hunter, Claude Rains. Story by Warren Duff. Directed by Michael Curtiz. Dramatic romance in which an American mannikin is set up in business in Paris and shows her appreciation by sticking to her benefactor during a scandal, reminiscent of l'affaire Stavisky. The acting of Claude Rains is outstanding, the entire cast is excellent, and Miss Francis as usual wears gorgeous creations. First National.
- 
- m** **UNDER COVER OF NIGHT**—Edmund Lowe, Florence Rice. Screenplay by Bertram Millhauser. Directed by George B. Seitz. Rivalry among college professors that leads to a death. Close-knit story with good characterizations, in which the chief interest lies in watching the detective find out what we already know. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- 
- f** **WE'RE ON THE JURY**—Helen Broderick, Victor Moore. Play "Ladies of the Jury" by Fred Ballard. Directed by Ben Holmes. An amusing story of a woman who cleverly sways the other eleven on the jury who have pronounced a girl guilty of murder, and who finally proves her innocence. The scenes in the jury room are highly entertaining comedy. RKO-Radio.
- 
- m** **WOMAN ALONE, THE**—Sylvia Sidney, Oscar Homolka, John Loder, Desmond Tester. Novel "The Secret Agent" by Joseph Conrad. Directed by Alfred Hitchcock. A young wife whose husband, without her knowing it, is a terrorist, and the plot is largely concerned with Scotland Yard's hunt for him, and efforts to forestall a bomb explosion. Directed by one of the world's masters of melodrama it is built up with extraordinary skill and intensely exciting, and with many novel situations. Gaumont-British.
- 
- f** **WOMAN IN DISTRESS**—May Robson, Irene Harvey, Dean Jagger. Screenplay by Albert deMond. Directed by Lynn Shores. The familiar rivalry between reporters—he and she—in the case of a lost Rembrandt owned by an old lady in Maine. Lively melodrama. Columbia.
- 
- f** **WOMAN WISE**—Michael Whalen, Rochelle Hudson. Screenplay by Ben Markson. Directed by Allan Dwan. The story of a sports writer's fight against racketeering fight-promoters—vigorous and something of a novelty. The title means the hero was NOT woman wise. 20th Century-Fox.
- 
- m** **YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE**—Sylvia Sidney, Henry Fonda. Screenplay by Gene Towne and Graham Baker. Directed by Fritz Lang. The story of an ex-convict who starts straight but whom the prejudice against an ex-convict hounds to a tragic end. Somber but powerful, and extremely well directed. United Artists.



## Foreign Language Films

- f UNDER FALSK FLAGG (Under False Colors)—Tutta Rolf. Screenplay by Solve Cederstrand. Directed by Gustaf Molander. A pleasant comedy about the complications that followed a banker's daughter's getting a job under an assumed name in her father's bank. Delightful characters. Swedish dialogue with English titles superimposed. Scandinavian.
- f VASTERHAVETS MAN (Men from the Western Sea)—One of Prince Wilhelm of Sweden's travelogues, showing the fishermen of the western coast. Short subject. Scandinavian.
- f VIND FRAN VAST (Wind from the West)—An interesting short about yacht racing. Scandinavian.

## SHORT SUBJECTS

### INFORMATIONALS

- fj BELGIUM—With emphasis on the ruin made by war. Good for peace programs. Columbia.
- f CASTLE TOWNS IN FRANCE—The old feudal castles. Columbia.
- fj DEXTERITY—Remarkable skill in aim, balance, etc., with Pete Smith comments. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj FISHING THRILLS (World of Sports)—Big game fishing. Columbia.
- fj FOREST GANGSTERS (Struggle to Live)—Catching lions. RKO-Radio.
- f GOING PLACES NO. 32—Lowell Thomas takes us to Bryce Canyon, Utah; to visit a bird lover; etc. Universal.
- f ICEMEN, THE—Ice hockey. RKO-Radio.
- fj \*LAND OF THE GHENGIS KHAN, THE (Magic Carpet)—Lovely pictures of the Asiatic scenes of the great conqueror's exploits. 20th Century-Fox.
- fj LOOKING FOR TROUBLE (Adventures of a Newsreel Cameraman)—Covering floods, earthquakes, storms on land and sea—thrilling scenes of devastation. 20th Century-Fox.
- m MARCH OF TIME NO. 6, THE (3rd Series)—Salt Lake City and the way the Mormon Church handles its unemployed; winter vacation resorts both in the South and North; the study of cancer and its causes—showing up quack doctors and their fake cures. RKO-Radio.
- fj OLD PARIS AND BERNE—Interesting scenes of old Paris with reference to their historical background, as well as the Swiss city of Berne. Columbia.
- f PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 6—Trailing a mountain lion with a camera instead of a gun; "Twilight," a Robert Bruce Technicolor of clouds at sunset. Paramount.
- f STRANGER THAN FICTION NOS. 33-34—Strange people and things all over the world. Universal.
- fj \*UNDERWATER ROMANCE (Sportlight)—Interesting and novel picture of underwater swimming. Paramount.

### CARTOONS

- fj CIRCUS DAZE (Happy Harmony)—Bosco and Honey take their dog to the circus and get involved in the flea circus. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj HOUSE CLEANING BLUES (Betty Boop)—Grampy shows Betty how to clean house. Paramount.
- fj HOUSE OF MAGIC (Meenie, Minnie, Moe)—The three little monkeys have an exciting time. Universal.
- fj MAGICIAN MICKEY (Mickey Mouse)—An amusing exhibit of magic. United Artists.
- fj PANELESS WINDOW WASHERS (Popeye)—Popeye not only cleans the windows but cleans up his rival. Paramount.
- fj SKELETON FROLIC (Color Rhapsody)—At midnight the skeletons come out to dance. Rather amusing. Columbia.

### COMEDIES, MUSICALS, NOVELTIES AND SKITS

- f BAD HOUSEKEEPING—Edgar Kennedy. A husband and wife change jobs for the day. RKO-Radio.
- f COMMUNITY SING NO. 1—Old songs for everybody to sing featuring Jones and Hare, Wendell Hall and Jolly. Columbia.
- f DANCING ON THE CEILING—Novel musical short. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f EVERY SUNDAY—Deanna Durbin, Judy Garland. How an old band leader's job of conducting Sunday park concerts is saved for him by two young girls. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f HOLLYWOOD—THE SECOND STEP—The second of the series showing the difficulties and discouragements besetting a girl trying to get ahead in the movies. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f HORSE PLAY—A man's embarrassments from buying a polo pony, with a new comedian somewhat like Frank Morgan. RKO-Radio.
- f SCREEN SNAPSHOTS NOS. 4-5—More interesting than usual. Columbia.
- f SCREEN TEST—Slapstick farce with Buster West and Tom Patricola supplying agile dancing and acrobatics. Educational.
- f SONG HITS ON PARADE—Freddie Rich and his orchestra playing popular numbers. Paramount.

## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

### SELECTED PICTURES for

*The Family Audience . . . . .*  
*. . . . . The Juvenile Audience*  
*The Mature Audience . . . . .*

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures has ready its Twenty-second *Annual Catalog of Selected Pictures*. This Catalog contains over 800 features and short subjects selected by the Review Committees of the Board during 1936. In addition the pictures rated as exceptional are so indicated. The Principles of Selection used by the Review Committees in making selections are included.

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## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures is a citizen body, organized in 1909 by the People's Institute of New York City as a medium for reflecting intelligent public opinion regarding a growing art and entertainment. This is still the Board's function, together with that of disseminating information on the subject of motion pictures and carrying on a constructive program having to do with community cooperation in the advancement and uses of the motion picture.

The National Board is opposed to legal censorship and is in favor of the community better films plan of placing emphasis upon and building support for the finer and more worthwhile films. It is at all times glad to cooperate with any agency to encourage and guide the motion picture in developing its possibilities both as recreation and as entertainment.

It carries on its work through various committees. All members of the committees serve without pay. No member is connected with the motion picture industry. They are representative of varied interests and activities and many are connected with large public welfare organizations or educational institutions.

The General Committee is a body evolved out of the original group organized in 1909. It is the appeal and central advisory committee of the National Board to which policies are referred and to which decisions of the Review Committee regarding pictures may be carried either by the producers or by the Review Committee itself.

The Executive Committee is composed of members of the General Committee and is the directing body of the National Board, charged with the formulation of policies, the election of members, the expenditure of funds and supervision of all administrative affairs.

The Review Committee is a large group of 300 members carrying on the work of reviewing the films. It is divided into sub-groups which meet for review per schedule during each week in the projection rooms of the various motion picture companies.

The Membership Committee supervises the membership list of the Review Committee and recommends the names of proposed new members for consideration by the Executive Committee.

The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays is composed of critics and students of the cinema interested particularly in encouraging the artistic development of the motion picture. It reviews and publishes a critique of the finest films and assists community groups in the showing of unusual films to special audiences. Its pioneer activity has done much to lay the foundation for the Little Photoplay Theatre movement and to stimulate the organization of subscription groups to develop audiences for the support of the creative achievements of the screen.

## NATIONAL MOTION PICTURE COUNCIL

The community or field work of the National Board of Review is conducted under its National Motion Picture Council, through affiliated membership groups, service contact groups and correspondents throughout the country. The National Council assists in the organization and program of work of local groups which are usually called Councils.

These Councils follow a plan initiated by the National Board in 1916 of having a membership composed of representatives from many organizations, cultural, educational, recreational, religious, and civic, so that they typify the original movement for community participation in the development and best use of the motion picture as recreation and education.

The objectives of such organizations are as follows:

To demonstrate through the education of public opinion, the effectiveness of selection and classification, instead of censorship, as a means of forwarding the development of the motion picture and its best uses.

To encourage through open meetings, forums, classes and other means, the study of the motion picture as a medium of entertainment, education and artistic expression.

To concentrate the attention of the public on specific worthwhile films through the publication of a Photoplay Guide to the selected pictures being currently shown at local theatres.

To arrange family Friday night or week-end programs of selected films, and junior matinees of pictures particularly suited to the tastes of children, through cooperation with local exhibitors.

To endorse and further the use of visual education through motion pictures in the schools.

To arrange and promote occasional exhibitions of exceptional and cultural films that would not normally be shown in the commercial theatres.

### PUBLICATIONS

The National Board of Review and its Council as an aid to the groups carrying out these objectives furnishes an informational service through its publications.

#### National Board of Review Magazine (monthly)

\$2.00 a year for individual subscriptions  
\$1.00 a year to Council or club groups

#### Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures

\$2.50 a year when taken alone, available at a special rate of \$1.00 in conjunction with the Magazine.

#### Selected Pictures Catalog (annual) \_\_\_\_\_ 25c

#### Special Film Lists \_\_\_\_\_ 10c ea.

Such as Selected Films for Children's Showings,  
Selected Book-Films, Educational Films, etc.

#### National Board of Review—Its Background, Growth and Present Status \_\_\_\_\_ free

#### National Board of Review—How It Works \_\_\_\_\_ free

#### A Plan and a Program for Community Motion Picture Councils \_\_\_\_\_ 10c



# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

Vol. XII, No. 3



APR March, 1937  
PERIODICAL DIVISION



Paul Muni and Luise Rainer in "The Good Earth" (see page 8)

*Published monthly, except July and August, by the  
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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

f DEVIL'S PLAYGROUND — Richard Dix, Chester Morris, Dolores Del Rio. Screenplay by Liam O'Flaherty and Edward Cherdarov. Directed by Erle C. Kenton. A story of submarines and divers, with the familiar plot about two pals estranged by a worthless woman and brought together again by one's rescuing the other. Capably done, but the rescue of the men in the sunken submarine is the most vivid part. Columbia.

f ESPIONAGE—Edmund Lowe, Madge Evans, Paul Lukas. Play by Walter Hackett. Directed by Kurt Newland. A breezy farce growing out of what in the beginning looks like a serious international situation. Bright dialogue and some amusing nonsense. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f EVERYBODY DANCE—Cecily Courtneidge, Ernest Truex. Screenplay by Ralph Spence. Directed by Charles Riesner. A comedy, with moments of sentiment, of two American youngsters who go to England to live with their Aunt Kate—a lady pretending to run a farm while really running a nightclub. A happy combination of English and American talent. Gaumont-British.

f \*FIRE OVER ENGLAND—Floya Robson, Lawrence Olivier, Raymond Massey. Novel by A. E. W. Mason. Directed by William K. Howard. A picturesque romance against a background of England, when the Spanish Armada came against Elizabeth. Col-

orful and exciting, and an interesting picture of the great Queen. Suggested for library and school use. United Artists.

f GLORY TRAIL, THE—Tom Keene, Joan Barclay. Story by Lynn Shores. Directed by John T. Neville. A story of covered wagon days and the settling of the West, with ex-soldiers from the Union and Confederate armies and Indians. Lively action. Crescent.

f \*GOOD EARTH, THE—See Exceptional Photoplays Department, page 8.

fj GREAT O'MALLEY, THE—Pat O'Brien. Story by Gerald Beaumont. Directed by William Dieterle. Pleasing story of a hard-boiled and too zealous cop who learns the lesson of human kindness through bitter experience. Well acted and nicely handled. Warner.

f HEAD OVER HEELS IN LOVE—Jessie Matthews. Play "Pierre ou Jean" by Francois de Croisset. Directed by Sonnie Hale. One of the pleasantest vehicles charming Jessie Matthews has had—a tale of a cabaret singer in Paris and the two young men in love with her, whose different ambitions were interwoven with her own career. Many delightful songs and dances. Gaumont-British.

m LAST OF MRS. CHEYNEY, THE—Joan Crawford, Robert Montgomery, William Powell. Play by Frederick Lonsdale. Directed by Richard Boleslavski. The story of an adventuress with a respectable soul who took a devious way to rise in the world, and arrived by chance at happiness. A comedy with more talk than action but bright and entertaining. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f \*LOST HORIZON—See Exceptional Photoplays Department, page 11.

f LOVE IS NEWS—Tyrone Power, Loretta Young, Don Ameche. Screenplay by William R. Lipman and Frederick Stephani. Directed by Tay Garnett. The amusing revenge taken by an heiress upon the reporter who has been hounding her in the headlines. A fresh and novel plot, handled briskly and entertainingly. A large cast of favorites. 20th Century-Fox.

m \*MAN WHO COULD WORK MIRACLES, THE—See Exceptional Photoplays Department, page 9.

(Continued on page 14)



# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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## The Motion Picture as an Adjunct to Teaching

By JOHANNA M. LINDLOF

*Member, New York City Board of Education*

*An address delivered at the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures, 22nd Annual Luncheon, February 6th, 1937.*

MOTION pictures offer great possibilities as a supplement to the oral teaching in the classroom. By their magic it is possible to extend the walls of any building to the far-reaches of the world-surfaces, the air, and the sea. But this can only be done when teachers and producers of film cooperate so that whatever is produced is educationally significant and falls within pedagogical scope. In addition to the pedagogical values, there are character development values which are based on what is presented for entertainment and recreation as well as information.

What is it that we must consider in order to have a film have pedagogical value? Films must present facts and ideas, but these must be given on the child's own age level. Six, sixteen, and sixty have not the same interests or capacity for comprehension, and many films fail for lack of a planned age level, aim, and direction. And, in addition, if there be any motivation to action as the result of seeing the film, it should lead to constructive action.

Not only 1492, foreign lands, a love of the sea, the mystery of the planets, but especially the story of the world about him—this is what he needs.

The city child is woefully ignorant of the natural and mechanical processes of life; he dwells in a tenement; he buys salmon in a can, milk in a bottle, bread in a paper bag, cheese in tinfoil, eggs in boxes, bananas in upside-down bunches, and he scoffs at any one who tells him that bananas grow with fingers pointing to the sky, or that peanuts look very different in their natural habitat. As a city dweller, he has grown to accept food, clothing, and shelter, without question. Everything comes from the store. He has no idea of the origins or the processes that are required to produce all of these things. All that he knows is the end-process which he purchases. But through motion pictures we can remedy that deficiency in our modern life. We can portray the poultry farm, the dairy farm, the coal mine, the story of the silkworm, the sheep, the cotton plantation, and how food is grown and brought to him from all quarters of the earth. Another new sphere, of ships, trains, railroads, the harbors of the world are his to explore. The skyways now become a potent factor in linking his life with the great world beyond. He is no longer a bored observer watching shadows flit across a screen, but a keen participant in interpreting to himself and his classmates, the tale of his own possessions and surroundings. His teacher first shows him

a film silently so that he gets a general appreciation of the content and establishes a mind set for the lesson. Then comes discussion with a second showing to clarify the thought-provoking questions conjured up in the discussion. Are there solutions to the problems presented in the film? The teacher helps the child find them. The problems presented somehow find their way into the child's drawings, compositions, projects. The knowledge and power gained, become permanent possessions belonging to the child's own world.

The difficulty with educational films is that the majority are too general in their information. Pictures produced by educators alone usually fail in technical perfection but thousands of pictures produced by technical experts, have fallen wretchedly flat for lack of understanding of the child's point of view. Often even those pictures which have color, drama, and a climax, show a life close to the child with such over-dramatization, and with such tear-jerking portrayal of poverty and ordinary situations that the child's antagonism is aroused. When suffering of any sort is extreme, instead of arousing sympathy, it produces a will to escape from it as rapidly as possible. This is particularly true as it applies to young people, so that overstatement fails at the very purpose it seeks to accomplish. Many an understanding teacher has watched the children and known that the silent urchin is proclaiming the material "baloney." He knows and recognizes dressed-up lessons paraded for the sake of screen morals. Motion picture producers should work with educators to produce films which fulfill the educational requirements which I have mentioned. Names of educators, names of college presidents, and professors have been appended to commercial pictures, but actually these celebrities have participated very little in planning the material to be presented and for the most part they are people who have long lost contact with the student in the classroom. If commercial producers are interested in giving us educational material that is pedagogically sound and educationally useful, they should seek the advice and guidance of competent

classroom teachers rather than the use of names.

When films are produced as the result of the union of expert technicians and the classroom interpreter, they should not be buried in one community or in one city. A good film should not know geographic location. What is vital for Los Angeles is also worthwhile for New York. Why not establish a national clearing house, supported by the public school systems of this country, making good films available to all sections of the nation. This lack of material about which we complain is, I hazard, a dearth largely based on poor distribution. A national educational library would enrich the school picture world many times over.

But all learning need not necessarily come under educational films directly connected with the curriculum and classroom material. The pictures that provide entertainment and recreation are often far more influential and far better retained than any pedagogical film. But the entertainment motion picture field to-day, with few notable exceptions, is a sad one to contemplate in terms of children. The films are full of gangsters, crime waves, sex, and hypersophisticates, or so sickeningly saccharine and sentimental that a discriminating audience is in despair. Children like them because they are full of drama, excitement reaching a climax, and are mechanically perfect. But I need scarcely say to this audience that for impressionable youngsters, many of them trying to overcome frustrations which have never been treated to air and light, there is an escape through day-dreams, and much juvenile delinquency is based on those heroes and heroines of the silver screen. These children have been presented with material which they have accepted as fact and they are motivated to the calibre of action which we, as educators, deplore. Why should not schools capitalize increasingly and with greater persistence on what we can learn from the entertainment field. We need more films of the action type, of explorers laboring through hardships, overcoming great danger, and finally reaching the long cherished goal. We need more tales of the scientist who



risks his life, injecting himself with deadly serum, but triumphing for the sake of mankind. We must have pictures of the struggles of those who first visualized lighter than air craft and inspire the young audience to a prognosis for the future. What about men who risk their lives to bring to boys and girls stories of under-sea life and specimens of the deep. Why not more pictures of Morse, Fulton, Edison, Bell, Whitney—of men who were the town fools and labored to bring their strange dreams to successful fruition for the sake of mankind which remained to praise where before it had scoffed? We don't want goody-goody pictures—films that crusade for the Elsie Dinsmore type, or films that the children themselves would reject in disgust for their priggish overstatement of morality. Films can develop standards and at the same time satisfy the ego which craves identification with the hero of the tale. In a recent film entitled *The Conquest of Diphtheria*, prepared through the cooperation of Miss Rita Hochheimer, Assistant Director of Visual Instruction of our New York City Schools, Dr. Francis Cohen, Assistant Director of Health Education in the Public Schools of New York City, and the Welfare Division of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, something of this idea was carried out in giving the children the opportunity to discuss the lives of Emil von Behring, Edwin Klebs, Frederick Loeffler, William Park, Bela Schick, and their contributions to the conquest of diphtheria. The motivation to constructive action was reported in that children came home and asked that they be given the Schick Test.

Photoplay appreciation should be taught in every school in this country. Teachers should be trained to help children view films with discrimination so that they themselves become critical guides. What films have they seen? What was their content? Did they like them? Did they dislike them? Why, and why, and why? We teachers try to develop a taste for fine literature in the schools. We open new worlds to our elementary and high school children with Stevenson, Browning, Longfellow, Shakespeare, Dickens. We try to develop an under-

standing of art by bringing fine pictures to them and we analyze Corot, Whistler, Rembrandt, Van Gogh, etc. Why should we not attempt to develop in our children a critical faculty which they can apply all their lives to school films, to the neighborhood theatre, and to the steady parade on the silver screen for years to come.

Develop standards of social values where "smart-aleckness," super-acquisitiveness, daring to the point of crime, and exhibitionism are not traits to be admired, and are not traits that lead the hero to success and you have made a great stride in terms of character training. This is what the motion picture should do instead of what it is doing.

The motion picture can be utilized as the best possible adjunct to teaching. It is said that we remember more of what we see than what we hear. We can bring the world into the confines of the classroom. But we need intelligent selection in deciding what of the world is best suited to the child, his nature and his needs, and I urge again that practical rather than theoretical educators be drawn into giving their opinions and experience in the development of the film material that is essential to an educational program.

Our budget for visual instruction in the New York City Schools is woefully inadequate. Out of a total of \$137,000,000 for 1936, \$35,000 were spent for visual education. Yet until citizens themselves understand the need for this type of instruction and until educators are inspired by fresh vision as to possibilities of lifting the educational film from the cut and dried to the level of the instructive and inspirational, we can expect few to raise their voices in favor of expanding one of the most vital forces given the educational field to-day.

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THE first supplement of the H. W. Wilson Company's Educational Film Catalog was published in January, 1937, containing 425 picture titles, the second will be published in April containing 115 titles. The full supplement service is \$2.00 a year and the individual supplements are 50 cents.

# Music and the Films

By DR. KURT LONDON

*Dr. London is the author of "Film Music" which was published in England last fall and received very favorable review in the film journals of that country.*

**I**F you sit in a concert hall or opera and hear music, you hear it consciously. If you sit in a cinema and see a picture, you hear the music for it more or less subconsciously. Now you know perhaps that the effect of a subconscious impression on your mind is stronger than a conscious one. Not immediately and quite different in its kind of effect but very important anyway.

I tell you this because most people do not consider film music as a very important branch of the art. And secondly they do not realize that music for the pictures is not necessarily the same thing as genuine film music.

Film music is quite a new art—quite a specialized science. Since we have had the sound film, its importance has particularly increased. I cannot tell you all about it in a few words, but I will try to outline at least the most important branches of the modern film music.

Let us distinguish between the more artistic and the more technical side. There is no denying the fact that the latter is more advanced than the former. But the technique of film music is not a mere question of apparatus. In the respect of apparatus we reckon with completely developed machines. The American-made sound machines are doubtless the best in the world.

But these machines demand understanding. They are not willing to take all we want to give them. Especially the microphone has quite a character of its own. It has its loves and its hatreds. For instance it hates brassy and does not like double basses at all. It does not always like the violins as we do. But it loves wind instruments, especially wood winds, as for instance clarinettes or bassoons. The microphone does not care for all human voices. You know that certainly from your own

experiences in the movies. It does not like large choruses either because of too many complicated vibrations.

From this you see how careful the film composers have to be in writing their scores. I am sorry to say that not very many composers are interested in acquiring this knowledge. They write as for a classical orchestra or for a jazz orchestra. And I am sorry too that the film industry which is, especially in America, so far ahead in using marvelous machines, has not, up till now, considered just this important point of the film music.

You can choose the human voice because there are many suitable for the microphone. But your choice of instruments is limited. So what can one do? Try to find out how to alter the instruments the microphone does not like—or even to invent new ones. It might be interesting for you to hear that several musicians and engineers in Paris were the first to try out new instruments especially suitable for the microphone. They worked in the Sax factory, Mr. Adolphe Sax is the son of the inventor of the saxophone. Of course, the problem was that these instruments must also be useful in the concert hall. Otherwise this would have been a very expensive business.

These experimenters succeeded. They changed several instruments and built new ones. As far as I know, one of the American broadcasting systems has adopted a new clarinet. Then in several European countries trials have been made with the so-called electrical instruments. There you have an electrical grand piano which the great scientist Nernst constructed for Bechstein. There there are several types of so-called ethel wave instruments which were originally invented by the Russian professor Theremin. The best one of these instruments now is the Ondium-Martenot by the French inventor Martenot in Paris. The famous composer Honegger has used the Martenot in many films which he has composed.

Finally there are several different sorts of instruments which produce very strange



sounds. The so-called Trautonium can almost imitate the sound of a human voice. Even string instruments can be made electrical. All of these instruments cannot be heard of themselves but will sound through the loud-speaker.

For the microphone there are some advantages in the use of these electrical instruments. Their vibrations are more suitable for it, since the strong high and low vibrations are somewhat reduced so that the sound becomes clearer—although sometimes a bit dryer. Let us suppose the composer understands his job and writes a score suitable for the microphone. The conductor has to agree with the recording director about the sound. The position of the players as regards the microphone must be corrected—or the position of the microphone has to be changed.

In any case the practice in conducting film music is absolutely different from conducting in concert halls or operas. Musician and technician have to collaborate. On the whole they do not understand each other's jobs very well and we, the public, have to suffer from their misunderstanding.

The development of the sound film is leading more and more to the musical film. I do not mean by this expression operettas or music hall comedies. I do not even mean pictures with singers like Grace Moore or Lily Pons. I will give you an example of what I mean. You have probably seen the films of the French director René Clair. Here we have a sort of genuine film music. The scenario is based not only upon a story with some songs in it, as for instance in films with singer stars. But the whole line of the dramatic development would not be possible without music. There is little dialogue. The scenes without dialogue are not just silent film with musical accompaniment but are a parallel between idea, movements and rhythm on the screen and in the music.

The film is quite different from the theatre. Many productions, especially in France and in England, have not recognized this fact. There is too much talk in the pictures. The film of the future, however, will have quite another form. It will limit

the talking without falling back to the time of silent films with canned music.

At this time, writer, director and musician will work together on a basis of equality. One cannot say for instance that film musicians in Hollywood have this equality. They get orders and have to fulfill them in a rather more administrative than artistic way. So most music you hear is normed. If you will be attentive the next time you go to the cinema, you will note very soon, that the music for most Hollywood pictures is made after the same prescription.

There is one kind of film which has real good film music: the cartoon. Whether it be Disney's pictures or others of a similar sort—these cartoons show you the best way to understand film music. Here are pictures and sound in perfect harmony.

In these days there is a great misunderstanding of film music because of the often used "background music." To give an example: a pair of lovers speak of their feeling for one another; or a tearful parting is enacted; or a dead man is being mourned. The list can be enlarged at will: any emotional moment in life is appropriate. Suddenly—no one can tell why—a violin starts sighing out some tearful phrases. Result: a terrible strain on the lachrymal glands. It is an abuse of music to use it for a dramatic effect which would be achieved in any case, provided the situation be well founded, well acted and well staged.

Or a documentary film is being shown. All the while the commentator's voice speaks words of wisdom—more or less. All through the film can be heard proceeding from an undefined source, soft but confused music. As we watch, we do not quite know whether to listen to the melody or the commentator. If the latter makes a pause, the music at once sounds louder; when he begins again, it becomes a shade more soft but does not cease to be obtrusive. These are some of the sins against the spirit of this new interesting art of film music which will certainly get more and more important.

These thoughts give you only an idea of the importance of film music in theory and practice, film music an art which is an essential part of the films.

# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS DEPARTMENT

This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of Exceptional and Honorable

Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.

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## The Good Earth

*Adapted by Talbot Jennings, Tess Slesinger and Claudine West from Pearl Buck's novel; directed by Sidney Franklin; photographed by Karl Freund; musical score by Herbert Stothart. Produced and distributed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.*

### The Cast

Wang .....	Paul Muni
O-lan .....	Luise Rainer
Uncle .....	Walter Connolly
Father .....	Charley Grapewin
Lotus .....	Tilly Losch
Cuckoo .....	Jessie Ralph
Aunt .....	Soo Yong
Elder son .....	Keye Luke
Younger son .....	Roland Lui
Little Fool .....	Suzanna Kim
Ching .....	Chingwah Lee
Cousin .....	Harold Huber
Liu, grain merchant .....	Olaf Hytten
Gateman .....	William Loze
Little Bride .....	Mary Wong

THE sight of Paul Muni awaking on his bridal morning and preparing to go to town for his bride is convincing enough to sustain a belief in him for several reels—a belief that he is Chinese, a young Chinese farmer, in China. That is the chief part of the miracle the filming of *The Good Earth* had to achieve: that here before us was China, and Chinese people. But along in the middle of the picture the impetus of that initial illusion has pretty well exhausted itself, and it becomes more and more impossible not to be conscious that this China of the screen is populated by a quite heterogeneous lot of people, many of them Chinese in the background but those that mostly fill the eye and attention turning out to be obviously familiar and admired friends from

Hollywood. The miracle did not quite come off.

That is not to say that the film is not worth the tremendous outlay of time and effort that went into its making. To present the real China, or even Pearl Buck's China, on the American screen, would probably be quite impossible; and the approximation that has been achieved is emphatically outstanding among current films. But it is outstanding to the extent that it challenges comparison with perfection.

The theme of the picture, of course, is the earth—the earth as the fundamental giver of life—and the theme is worked out in the story of a young Chinese farmer and the woman he takes from slavery in the Big House of the nearby city to be his wife. Their marriage, the birth of children, the slow, hard battle with the soil and the gradual beginnings of success and increase of land, fill the first part of the film with vigorous vitality, warm and universal.

Then comes drought and famine, and the little family leaves its land to join a vast procession of hunger-driven peasants toward the city, where they find themselves in the center of a civil conflict—one of those revolutionary struggles that afflict China—which changes their whole destiny. For O-lan, the wife, gets caught up in a mob that is breaking into a palace. The mob is driven out by soldiers and O-lan is trampled on by the fighting crowd. She is almost killed, and given an injury that stays with her all her days till it finally kills her—but she has found and kept a little bag of jewels. With



them Wang can go back to his farm, work it prosperously, add to it, till he is rich.

Years pass, the sons grow up, and Wang has changed from a simple peasant to a man of great property and social ambitions. He buys the Big House in the city where O-lan had been a slave, and sets himself up as a great lord there, abandoning the simple ways of his youth and even taking a second wife—a dancing girl. This girl—so different from O-lan—almost wrecks the family by working her allurements on Wang's son. But just as domestic tragedy is about to break, word comes of a storm of locusts heading for the farm. All Wang's fortune—somehow—depends on saving the farm from this scourge. The rest of the film is the battle against the locusts (a brilliant triumph of camera work). When the battle is won O-lan dies, but Wang is back again on the good earth, with something that hints of salvation hovering over him.

During that passage of years while Wang was growing rich the picture broke in two, so definitely that it almost seems as if new writers, a new director and a new set of actors had taken it over. The whole strength of Paul Muni's characterization evaporates, and he becomes as American as if in the interval he had had a course in a university in the United States. The story heads for a brief while toward a tragic entanglement of passion—all interest moves far from the earth and its goodness to an absorbing situation of father and son and two wives. Then that new thread of interest is cut off abruptly by the pure accident of the locusts coming and the good earth theme is wrenched back into the story. It provides a grandly exciting bravura finish in which the disturbing second wife conveniently (and without explanation) vanishes, and everybody forgets the issues that have torn everybody apart and forgives everybody else, and Paul Muni stands under a peach-tree that is all he has left of O-lan for a fade-out. It is a let-down that almost erases the memory of the fine first half of the picture.

Just one thing holds the thing together and gives it some semblance of being a whole—Luise Rainer, as O-lan. She cannot make herself ugly, as the O-lan of the book

was ugly, but she gives the part something deeper than appearance which is both a character and a symbol. It is a rare and rich performance.

Some of the most beautiful photography the screen can boast keeps *The Good Earth* a continual delight to the eye—photography that is not only lovely to look at but a potent element in setting the moods and emotions of the scenes.—J.S.H.

*Rated honorable mention.*

## The Man Who Could Work Miracles

*Written by H. G. Wells; directed by Lothar Mendes; photographed by Bernard Browne and Maurice Forde. Produced by Alexander Korda for London Film Productions; distributed by United Artists.*

### *The Cast*

<i>George McWhirter Fotheringay</i> . . .	<i>Roland Young</i>
<i>Ada Price</i> . . . . .	<i>Joan Gardner</i>
<i>Colonel Winstanely</i> . . . . .	<i>Ralph Richardson</i>
<i>Mr. Maydig</i> . . . . .	<i>Ernest Thesiger</i>
<i>Bill Stoker</i> . . . . .	<i>Robert Cochran</i>
<i>Housekeeper</i> . . . . .	<i>Lady Tree</i>
<i>P. C. Winch</i> . . . . .	<i>Wallace Lupino</i>
<i>Effie Brickman</i> . . . . .	<i>Gertrude Musgrove</i>
<i>Major Grigsby</i> . . . . .	<i>Edward Chapman</i>
<i>Maggie Hooper</i> . . . . .	<i>Sophie Stewart</i>
<i>Moody</i> . . . . .	<i>George Zucco</i>
<i>Cox (landlord)</i> . . . . .	<i>Bruce Winston</i>
<i>Mr. Bamphyde</i> . . . . .	<i>Lawrence Hanray</i>
<i>Reporter</i> . . . . .	<i>Bernard Nedell</i>
<i>Supt. Smithells</i> . . . . .	<i>Wally Patch</i>

TWO H. G. Wells films were made last year, but the first one, this *Man Who Could Work Miracles*, has only just arrived upon the local screens. *Things to Come*, much more ambitious and pretentious, was exhibited first, without creating any furore of acclaim. It had a lot of grandiose pictorial beauty, and a grandiose Wellsian prophesy of a future, better, world. It wasn't very convincing and it fell pretty flat.

*The Man Who Could Work Miracles* is much less pretentious, and cinematically it has none of the modern brilliance that was the most distinguished thing about *Things to Come*. It sticks to a rather primitive type of scenario, and the kind of camera devices that were used thirty years ago, when



*Roland Young doing one of his miracles in the new Wells' picture*

movies were new. But it is just as characteristically Wells, but—happily—the Wells of Mr. Kipps and Mr. Polly. It centers in the kind of simple little Englishman that Wells has often pictured with such warmth and sympathy, who gives a heart to the problems explored and makes them something nearer to common experience than the dialectical vastness this brilliant dreamer is so apt to indulge in when setting out to re-make the world.

It is a fantasy, shown in the frame of a sort of plot in heaven—an angel-like being, with power over the earth, trying an experiment with the inhabitants of this planet. His experiment consists in bestowing upon one man, picked haphazard, the power to work miracles. This power falls to the lot of a little man—a Roland Young man—who is a clerk in a department store. A man so amazed at this sudden ability of his that at first he can think of nothing better to do with it than such vaudeville tricks as pulling rabbits out of hats. Gradually he finds more

useful things to do—like relieving a girl of the freckles that keep her unattractive to her young man. From that his mind goes on to enterprises of still larger benevolence, till at last he is trying to better the whole social system. But the trouble with his power is that it is confined to only physical things. He cannot change men's minds, or their souls. And in the end—like the person in the fairy tale who had just one more wish that would be granted—he asks that his power be taken from him and everything be as it was before the power came. And the earth's guardian angel, seeing what a mess his experiment has turned out to be, has to be satisfied with the reflection that man's growth is a very slow affair, but that the seed of growth is in him, and will work on through the ages.

This fable is told with a vast amount of amusing detail, which doesn't at all dull the point of its search into many tremendously important problems. Being H. G. Wells, it argues a good deal, and arguments



involve words. But the dialogue manages not to be too long nor too heavy—by being given to characters so sharply drawn that they are often close to caricatures, it keeps crisp and lively. When the little man, in a frenzy of idealistic reformation and filled with fury against what seems to him universal injustice, gets all the great ones of the earth into a vast hall to perform the ultimate miracle of complete regeneration, a real passion gets into the film—something profoundly moving.

But, unlike most Wells preachments, it has no glib answer to all the questions. There the questions are, immensely important, inescapable, but without any god-like solution. It is up to man to work them out.

So the film is after all not a preachment—it just points at things. And perhaps in the most effective way—the entertaining way. For the film is above everything else good entertainment, with the kind of plot and incidents that keep interesting, with their implications only a by-product.

Mr. Wells has a great deal to say, and he has said it all very often, and at great length. Probably he has found no more efficacious way of saying it, for the great mass of people he wants so much to reach, than in this film, which combines so delightfully so many of the elements of sermon, social tract, fairy-tale and adventure story.

—J.S.H.

*Rated honorable mention*

## Critical Comment

*Under this heading pictures will be discussed that in the judgment of the Exceptional Photoplays Committee do not gain the rating of Exceptional yet possess qualities that we have found our readers are interested in having talked about.*

### Capra and Tibet

TO those honestly concerned with the development of the motion picture as an art, Frank Capra has endeared himself above most producers of films. One after another, his pictures have appealed both to the exacting few who have demanded that the screen be bright with truth as well as vivid motion, and to the many whose demands at the box office have made the whole art of the screen possible. But in Hollywood's mushroom growth there has always been the unfortunate obstacle of a tendency to run (as in the copying of ideas, forms, effects) before one could walk, and many of the most arty attempts have tripped over this obstacle. Frank Capra never tripped because he never came anywhere near such an obstacle.

But after getting himself a name for being a sort of magician in the movies, he apparently began to take seriously a lot of things the movies (as he knew them) had never heard of. In *Lost Horizon* he seemed to see both a smashing adventure story and an excursion into philosophy that would stun

everybody. So he and his right-hand script writer (Robert Riskin) went to work on what is all too obviously an "epic."

*Lost Horizon* in the Capra production for Columbia is manifestly high adventure with no expense spared. The plane Ronald Colman boards rises stirringly above the rebellion of the Chinese masses and rides stirringly through the night as Colman and his younger brother discover that they are being kidnapped along with a hodge-podge of passengers (an erratic E. E. Horton paleontologist, an Isabel Jewel embittered sickly woman, a Thomas Mitchell ruined banker risen from plumber, etc.) The plane takes them into Tibet, higher and higher into the mountains, and their chance crack-up leads into the highest adventure of all—their discovery of a sheltered lamastery where the cross purposes of winds and mountains, private careers and universal revolutions, fade away in an atmosphere of June and good-will.

Up to this point it is still tense adventure stuff. But at this point Capra leaves an action-spectacle for a romantic-Utopia in

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# The French Talking Films

By BELLE P. RAND

*Mrs. Rand is Chairman of the French Talking Films Committee at Cambridge, Mass., and writes here of her experiences as such.*

ONE late afternoon in Paris, in August 1931, after a long day in the Bibliothèque Nationale, we strolled into the Paramount Cinema on the Grand Boulevard. We saw there our first French talking picture—Maurice Chevalier in *La Grande Maré*. Instantly I was struck with the idea, "Why, here is a wonderful way to bring colloquial French conversation to our students in America." On our return to Cambridge I consulted the young man who projected educational silent-films for Harvard University. He was enthusiastic over enlarging his field of activities. A handsome, new building had just been erected, the Institute of Geography, with a charming auditorium equipped with the latest model of sound machines. If we used this hall for our French pictures no admission could be charged the students as the auditorium was in a college building.

The question was how to obtain the money for the expenses of showing the pictures. Several of us, ladies of the faculty, wrote personal letters to Francophile friends in Greater Boston explaining that our aim was, by means of well-chosen French films to arouse amongst our students an interest in France and the French language. The response was so enthusiastic that we formed a committee and made preparations to give several pictures instead of one as originally planned.

Our first film was René Clair's *Le Million*. It proved so popular that we could not accommodate the crowds that flocked to the building. Instead of only one showing, we arranged to give three performances of each picture, one matinee and two evening showings. The little auditorium holds 300 people. Everybody connected with the university

was admitted gratuitously, the expenses being borne by voluntary contributions from people outside the college circle who also received tickets. The popularity of the pictures grew and we arranged for more performances at ever increasing expense. Then we restricted the free tickets to everybody in the university below the rank of assistant professor. Students, instructors, stenographers and clerks were admitted free of charge, but assistant professors and those of higher rank were asked to become voluntary subscribers.

Then came the difficulty of obtaining sufficient good films to supply the demand. There was no market in New York for French films. The few that had been brought in were a great loss to the distributors. Our one source was Paramount. We showed every picture that this company had imported, if they were at all suitable for our purposes. Even to this day when there is a plethora of good films to choose from we have never shown anything to surpass Paramount's *Marius*. But most of their pictures were American films done over into French for consumption in French provincial towns. One of them, *Cheri*, showed St. Granier at a negro camp-meeting in Florida. This would never do—*que faire?* Just then the French Ambassador at Washington, hearing of our activities, offered to let us bring in a few films via the *valise diplomatique*.

From the beginning I had hoped to persuade the different universities throughout our country to use French films in their modern language courses. By dint of much letter-writing and persuasion a few colleges had the temerity to give the experiment a trial. The great difficulty has been that very few institutions were furnished with sound equipment. In some instances it was necessary to take over a theatre at great expense



and show the picture in the morning. *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*, the first French classic to be filmed was sent us in the diplomatic pouch and was shown in several universities with moderate success. Although not rated by some critics as a very good picture, it gave to our students the opportunity to see a play by Moliere done by French actors.

These films which come in the *valise diplomatique* are rented for a small sum; the proceeds of the rentals are sent back to Paris to re-imburse the firms who lend them. The films are kept in our country only three months and are then returned to Paris. This in no way injures their commercial value, as they are shown in comparatively few places. They naturally are not furnished with English sub-titles which must always be added if the films are to be shown in commercial theatres.

To insure a good selection of films to be sent in the diplomatic pouch a committee was formed in Paris, composed of prominent French people and of Americans living in Paris. Madame Maurice Girod-de L'Ain is president of this committee and Dorothy Leet, directress of the American Women's University Club, is secretary-treasurer. Different members of the committee endeavour to see as many films as possible; a selection is made, the firms are interviewed, and the necessary steps taken to have the films put in the *valise diplomatique*. They are sent to the office of M. Yves Chataigneau at the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, who with never-failing courtesy makes the arrangements for the exportation of the films.

We are just rounding out our fifth year with ever-increasing popularity, and are happy to see that our efforts to introduce French films to other universities are at last meeting with success. This autumn, in New York, several new firms were formed for the importing of French films. *La Maternelle* proved so popular that nineteen copies were in circulation all winter. We hope that, next winter, we shall see many more schools and universities, equipped with their own machines, using the films as a regular part of their curriculum.

In our experience we find that the short film—"documentaire"—which, in our program, always precedes the long picture, is quite as popular as the feature film. We always begin our program with a short speech in French, either by a young instructor or by a student who has lived in France and whose accent is impeccable. Then comes the *documentaire*—and what wonderful pictures we have shown! *Les Cathedrales de France, Versailles, Arles, Au Pays de Lamartine, Images d'Auvergne, Mt. St. Michel*, etc.—magic casements, through which, there in our little theatre in Cambridge, we may look upon some of the most precious monuments in the world. Small wonder that the students at a neighboring school, as their instructor testifies, await the showing of a French film with more eagerness than they do a foot-ball game.

*The French films available for the first months of the year were the feature "Cessez Le Feu"—Armistice Day and the documentaries, "Un Petit Village" and "Visages de France." Mrs. Rand is pleased to give information on these and other French films available. Those university and school groups seeking information may address, Mrs. E. K. Rand, 107 Lake View Ave., Cambridge, Mass.*

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## A French Film in the Theatre

A French film which is having marked success in the commercial theatres is *La Kermesse Heroique* (Carnival in Flanders), chosen by the National Board of Review as the best picture of 1936. It had a long run in New York and met with unusual popularity in New Orleans. Both of these cities would provide large French speaking audiences, however the film has not been limited to them but has received the attention of all those interested in unusual films. Certain California cities have shown it and Little Theatres in many communities have or are planning to book it.

## Capra and Tibet

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which he is no longer at ease. It turns out that Ronald Colman (an Anthony Edenish diplomat) has written some of the clearest philosophy of his day, and that for this reason a Grand Lama (instigated by The Girl) has shanghaied him hither to be Grand Lama Presumptive. Life in the lamasery, which is already getting too prolonged by reason of its miraculous climate, diet and general unworldliness, is thus extended to include romance, many pastoral shots, a natural conflict between the brothers and their love affairs, and some statements about the world that come even sillier from a Hollywood Grand Lama than they would from Arthur Brisbane. Ronald Colman is tricked, after having been made Grand Lama, into thinking he has been tricked; he goes out into the terrible winds again and after desperate adventures forsakes the world once more to return to his waiting sweetheart for the fade-out. Meanwhile there have been perhaps seven minutes in which the hand of Frank Capra might be considered visible, if palsied.

For the rest of it, no one could say who made the picture. It is mounted with elaborate heaviness, but on tissue paper. It abandons action for thought, and then spreads the thought so cosmic and wide that it cannot be any deeper than half-way tide over mud flats. The sets constructed (to life size) for the strange region of Shangri-La are alone worthy of Ahs and Ohs: the evident care in casting and acting stands out above the average run of most productions; but then there comes all this serious statement of the improbable that could be set forth effectively only in burlesque, and these random light-comedy effects that become burlesque against such a background—and in the end a person doesn't know where he is, except that he is nowhere as far as pictures are concerned. This film was made with obvious care and expense; but it will be notable in the future only as the first wrong step in a career that till now

has been a denial of the very tendencies in pictures which this film represents.—O.F.

## Selected Pictures Guide

(Continued from page 2)

- m MICHAEL STROGOFF (new title "The Soldier and the Lady")—Anton Walbrook, Elizabeth Allan. Novel by Jules Verne. Directed by George Nicholls, Jr. Siberia in 1870 when the Tartar hordes were up in arms against Tsar Alexander II. Michael Strogoff is sent as a courier and only through his bravery are the Tartars routed. A tense drama well directed and exceptionally well acted by Anton Walbrook. Suggested for library use. RKO-Radio.
- fj OFF TO THE RACES—The Jones Family. Screenplay by Frank R. Adams. Directed by Robert Florey. Slim Summerville and horse and small daughter join the Jones family for County Fair Week, and romance comes to the oldest girl. This human and amusing series gets better and better. 20th Century-Fox.
- f ON THE AVENUE—Dick Powell, Madeleine Carroll, Alice Faye. Screenplay by Gene Markey and William Conselman. Directed by Roy Del Ruth. A highly amusing and entirely entertaining musical comedy with pleasing songs, good acting and plenty of laughs. Music and lyrics by Irving Berlin. 20th Century-Fox.
- m OUTCAST—Warren William, Karen Morley. Story by Frank R. Adams. Directed by Robert Florey. An interesting story of a woman's hate which turns to love. The story gets a bit maudlin during a lynching scene but otherwise the picture is satisfying. Paramount.
- f PARADISE EXPRESS — Grant Withers. Screenplay by Allan Elston and Paul Perez. Directed by Joseph Kane. How a receiver for a bankrupt railroad put the road on its feet again in spite of the villainies of a trucking company. Republic.
- fj PENROD AND SAM—Billy Mauch. Novel by Booth Tarkington. Directed by William McGann. Some of the Tarkington characters playing G-men, and in the end helping to catch a real bank robber. Good juvenile entertainment for the whole family. First National.



f **SEA DEVILS**—Victor McLaglen, Preston Foster, Ida Lupino. Screenplay by Frank Wead and John Twist. Directed by Ben Stollhoff. A typical McLaglen vehicle with plenty of fighting, both verbal and fistic, but this time his bitter enemy is his daughter's favored suitor who is under his command in the Coast Guard service. The story is well told and the scenes of rescue at sea are thrilling. RKO-Radio.

f **TWO WISE MAIDS**—Alison Skipworth, Polly Moran, Marcia Mae Jones. Screenplay by Endre Rohem. Directed by Phil Rosen. A story of two old-maid school teachers in a poor New York section, and how the fruits of a teacher's labors came back to help her in the end. Interesting, amusing and often touching—much warm human sentiment in it. Republic.

f **\*WHEN YOU'RE IN LOVE**—Grace Moore, Cary Grant. Screenplay by Cedric Worth. Directed by Robert Riskin. A highly entertaining picture concerning a young and beautiful opera singer who marries for convenience and discovers she really loves her husband. Miss Moore's voice is lovely, the acting of the entire cast is good and the production is well directed. Columbia.

f **\*WINGS OF THE MORNING**—Annabella, Henry Fonda, Leslie Banks. Stories by Donn Byrne. Directed by Harold Schuster. A romance of Ireland and gypsies and a Derby winner, good-humored and enjoyable, done in color that adds to the charm of its Irish landscapes. It brings the delightful Annabella an English-speaking part that should introduce her successfully to the general American public—and all the other characters are likeable. 20th Century-Fox.

#### FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILMS

f **SAMVET SOMMA ADOLF** (Adolf's Military Adventures)—Adolf Jahr, Karin Albin. Screenplay by Weyler Hildebrand and T. Lundquist. Directed by Sigurd Wallen. A gay tale of a singer who gets caught for his military training just as his first big chance for an operatic engagement comes along. Vastly entertaining—in Swedish with English titles. Fred O. Renard.

f **SALTSJO OCH MALARVAG** (Saltsea and Mälar Waves)—A sightseeing sail around the waters near Stockholm. Fred O. Renard.

f **TACKEL OCH TAG** (Tackle and Ropes)—Training boys for the navy on an old windjammer. Fred O. Renard.

#### SHORT FILMS

- f **HOLLANDER, THE**—Technicolor trip through Holland. Vitaphone.
- f **IT'S A LIVING**—Odd ways of earning a living, such as making glass eyes, corn cob pipes, wigs; screaming for the radio, etc. Paramount.
- f **MARCH OF TIME NO. 7** (3rd Series)—Enemies of alcohol—showing the opposing forces of liquor manufacturers, racketeers and the W. C. T. U.; Father of all Turks—Mustapha Kemal's efforts to build up his country; Birth of swing—tracing present swing music back to the original jazz band. RKO-Radio.
- f **NICE WORK**—Silver making; hand weaving; sugar making, etc. Vitaphone.
- m **ON THE NOSE**—Grantland Rice Sportlight of killing wild life in an unsportsmanship way. Paramount.
- f **PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 7**—Making rocquefort cheese in France; Albert Payson Terhune talks about care of dogs, etc. Paramount.
- fj **PATHE TOPICS NO. 4**—Three sections of which the most interesting are about farming without soil and the making of miniature imitation forests. RKO-Radio.
- f **PICTORIAL REVUE NOS. 3-5**—Girl football players; training for flying, etc. Vitaphone.
- f **POPULAR SCIENCE NO. 4**—Kitchen gadgets; how microscopic glass is made, etc. Paramount.
- fj **PUTTIN' ON THE DOG**—About hunting dogs. RKO-Radio.
- f **ROMANTIC MEXICO**—Mexico City and its surrounding country. RKO-Radio.
- fj **SKI PARADE, THE**—Skiing scenes from all over the world. 20th Century-Fox.
- f **TORTURE MONEY** (Crime Does Not Pay Series)—About the collecting-damages-for-accidents racket. Vivid and interesting. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f **UNDER SOUTHERN STARS**—An episode in the War Between the States done in technicolor. Vitaphone.
- fj **\*WESTERN GRANDEUR** (Magic Carpet)—A beautiful scenic devoted to our national parks. Suggested for schools and libraries. 20th Century-Fox.
- fj **WHERE SNOW IS KING**—Winter sports in the shadow of the Matterhorn. Paramount.

#### CARTOONS

- fj **BOOK SHOP, THE** (Terrytoon)—A little pup's adventures in a dreamland of books. Educational.
- fj **LUMBER CAMP, THE** (Meany, Miny, Moe)—The three little monkeys and their troubles in the woods. Universal.
- f **MOOSE HUNTERS** (Mickey Mouse)—Mickey and his pals go after a couple of bull mooses. United Artists.
- fj **ORGAN GRINDER'S SWING, THE**—Popeye and his rival fight over an organ grinder and Olive Oil and the monkey join in. Very noisy and lively. Paramount.
- fj **PORKY'S ROAD RACE**—Amusing cartoon of stars caricatured as auto racers. Vitaphone.

#### COMEDIES, MUSICALS, NOVELTIES AND SERIALS

- f **CINEMA CIRCUS**—An entertaining hodge-podge of Hollywood stars and circus performers with Lee Tracy as ringmaster—in color. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f **FUN'S FUN**—Jefferson Machamer tries to get away from drawing nothing but pictures of beautiful girls. Many clever bits in its amusement. Educational.
- f **JIMMY LUNCEFORD AND HIS DANCE ORCHESTRA**—Colored orchestra and dancers. Vitaphone.
- f **LOUISIANA KINGS**—Orchestra on a river boat, good dancing and singing. Vitaphone.
- f **MUSIC BY MORGAN**—Good renditions of popular songs by Russ Morgan's orchestra. Paramount.
- f **POETS OF THE ORGAN**—Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Crawford. Vitaphone.
- j **SECRET AGENT X9 NOS. 1-4** (Serial)—Scott Kolk, Jean Rogers. A serial about a famous criminal who defies the police and Government men in stealing some crown jewels. Universal.
- f **SEE UNCLE SOL**—A radio parody on the court of domestic relations, largely singing and dancing. Educational.
- f **STAR REPORTER NO. 2, THE**—Vincent Lopez and his orchestra; personalities in the theatrical world. Paramount.
- f **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**—An interesting episode in a young man's life. Is it mental telepathy or just chance that saves him from death. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures is a citizen body, organized in 1909 by the People's Institute of New York City as a medium for reflecting intelligent public opinion regarding a growing art and entertainment. This is still the Board's function, together with that of disseminating information on the subject of motion pictures and carrying on a constructive program having to do with community cooperation in the advancement and uses of the motion picture.

The National Board is opposed to legal censorship and is in favor of the community better films plan of placing emphasis upon and building support for the finer and more worthwhile films. It is at all times glad to cooperate with any agency to encourage and guide the motion picture in developing its possibilities both as recreation and as entertainment.

It carries on its work through various committees. All members of the committees serve without pay. No member is connected with the motion picture industry. They are representative of varied interests and activities and many are connected with large public welfare organizations or educational institutions.

The General Committee is a body evolved out of the original group organized in 1909. It is the appeal and central advisory committee of the National Board to which policies are referred and to which decisions of the Review Committee regarding pictures may be carried either by the producers or by the Review Committee itself.

The Executive Committee is composed of members of the General Committee and is the directing body of the National Board, charged with the formulation of policies, the election of members, the expenditure of funds and supervision of all administrative affairs.

The Review Committee is a large group of 300 members carrying on the work of reviewing the films. It is divided into sub-groups which meet for review per schedule during each week in the projection rooms of the various motion picture companies.

The Membership Committee supervises the membership list of the Review Committee and recommends the names of proposed new members for consideration by the Executive Committee.

The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays is composed of critics and students of the cinema interested particularly in encouraging the artistic development of the motion picture. It reviews and publishes a critique of the finest films and assists community groups in the showing of unusual films to special audiences. Its pioneer activity has done much to lay the foundation for the Little Photoplay Theatre movement and to stimulate the organization of subscription groups to develop audiences for the support of the creative achievements of the screen.

## NATIONAL MOTION PICTURE COUNCIL

The community or field work of the National Board of Review is conducted under its National Motion Picture Council, through affiliated membership groups, service contact groups and correspondents throughout the country. The National Council assists in the organization and program of work of local groups which are usually called Councils.

These Councils follow a plan initiated by the National Board in 1916 of having a membership composed of representatives from many organizations, cultural, educational, recreational, religious, and civic, so that they typify the original movement for community participation in the development and best use of the motion picture as recreation and education.

The objectives of such organizations are as follows:

To demonstrate through the education of public opinion, the effectiveness of selection and classification, instead of censorship, as a means of forwarding the development of the motion picture and its best uses.

To encourage through open meetings, forums, classes and other means, the study of the motion picture as a medium of entertainment, education and artistic expression.

To concentrate the attention of the public on specific worthwhile films through the publication of a Photoplay Guide to the selected pictures being currently shown at local theatres.

To arrange family Friday night or week-end programs of selected films, and junior matinees of pictures particularly suited to the tastes of children, through cooperation with local exhibitors.

To endorse and further the use of visual education through motion pictures in the schools.

To arrange and promote occasional exhibitions of exceptional and cultural films that would not normally be shown in the commercial theatres.

### PUBLICATIONS

The National Board of Review and its Council as an aid to the groups carrying out these objectives furnishes an informational service through its publications.

#### National Board of Review Magazine (monthly)

\$2.00 a year for individual subscriptions  
\$1.00 a year to Council or club groups

#### Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures

\$2.50 a year when taken alone, available at a special rate of \$1.00 in conjunction with the Magazine.

Selected Pictures Catalog (annual) ..... 25c

Special Film Lists ..... 10c ea.

Such as Selected Films for Children's Showings,  
Selected Book-Films, Educational Films, etc.

National Board of Review—Its Background,  
Growth and Present Status ..... free

National Board of Review—How It Works ..... free

A Plan and a Program for Community  
Motion Picture Councils ..... 10c

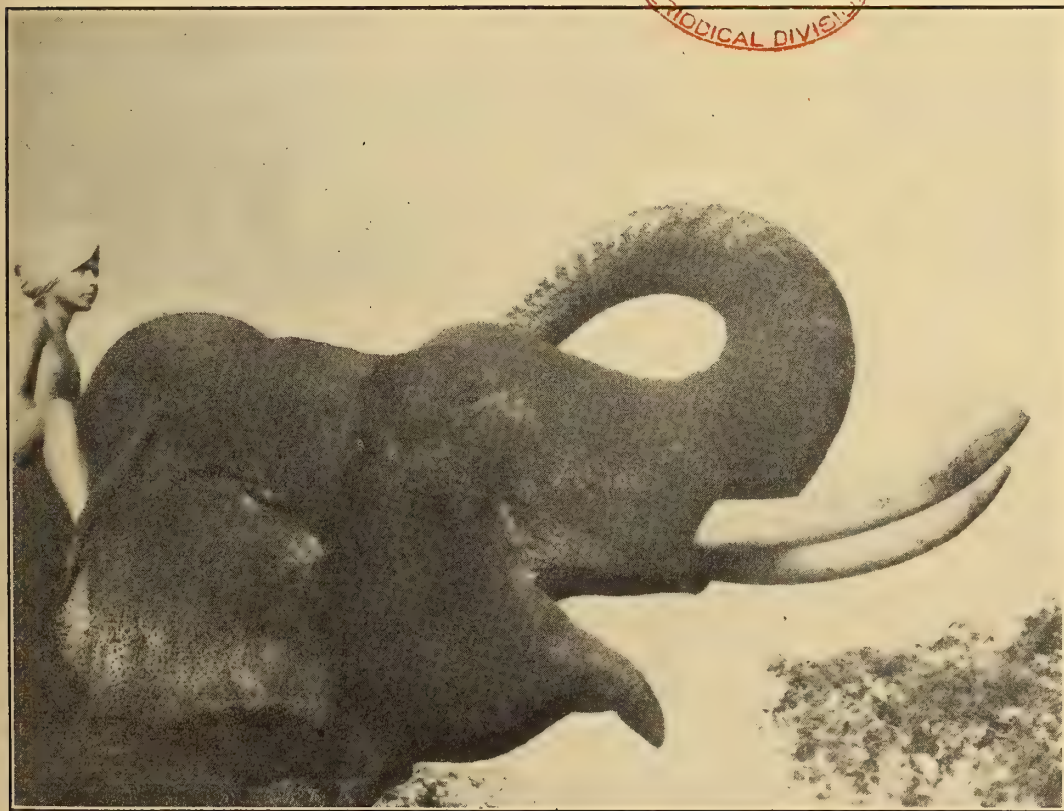
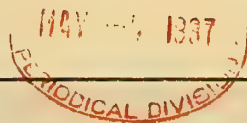


# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

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April, 1937



*Sabu, the Indian boy, and Iravatha, the elephant, as Toomai and Kala Nag in "Elephant Boy" (see page 9)*

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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- i—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- n—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

f CALIFORNIA STRAIGHT AHEAD—John Wayne, Louise Latimer. Screenplay by Herman Boxer. Directed by Arthur Lubin. Story of an ambitious youth who starts a trucking business, and makes a name for himself when he beats a special freight train from Chicago to Los Angeles. Universal.

jf \*ELEPHANT BOY—See Exceptional Photographs Department, page 9. Suggested for schools and libraries.

f \*FAMILY AFFAIR, A—Lionel Barrymore. Play "Skidding" by Aurania Rouveyrel. Directed by George B. Seitz. The story of a District Judge, and how a big construction company tried to prevent his re-election, bringing extra pressure on his family to further their ends. A heart-warming picture of the *Ah, Wilderness* type, with Cecilia Parker, Julie Hayden and swell Mickey Rooney as the children. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f GIRL LOVES BOY—Cecilia Parker, Eric Linden. Screenplay by Karl Brown and Hinton Smith. Directed by Duncan Mansfield. A small town story, laid in the horse-and-buggy days, of the rich man's playboy son and the poor dressmaker's daughter. A bit over-loaded with sentimentality, and carelessness of detail, but human and touching. Grand National.

m HER HUSBAND LIES—Ricardo Cortez, Gail Patrick. Story by Oliver H. P. Gar-

rett. Directed by Edward Ludwig. An interesting picture, a re-make of *The Street of Chance*, of a notorious gambler who sacrifices everything to make his younger brother give up gambling. Well acted by the entire cast. Paramount.

m HISTORY IS MADE AT NIGHT—Charles Boyer, Jean Arthur, Leo Carrillo, Colin Clive. Screenplay by Gene Towne and Graham Baker. Directed by Frank Borzage. The devious plottings of an insanely jealous husband to keep his wife from divorcing him. Unlikely melodrama handsomely done, with some nice comedy bits. United Artists.

f I PROMISE TO PAY—Chester Morris, Leo Carrillo, Helen Mack. Screenplay by Mary McCall, Jr., and Lionel Houser. Directed by D. Ross Lederman. A vigorous story of the loan shark racket, and a young man with a wife and two children who had the courage to fight against it. Contemporary in its interest and warmly human in some of its characters. Columbia.

f KING AND THE CHORUS GIRL, THE—Fernand Gravet, Joan Blondell, Edward Everett Horton. Screenplay by Norman Krasna and Groucho Marx. Directed by Mervyn Le Roy. A feather-weight comedy about a king who has lost his throne and is going to the dogs through boredom, and an American chorus girl who arouses his interest in life again. An attractive new star, and the comedy is vastly enlivened by many Marxian (Groucho) quips. Warner.

ff LAND BEYOND THE LAW—Nick Foran, Linda Perry. Screenplay by Marion Jackson. Directed by B. Reeves Eason. A rousing adventure tale of the bringing of law and order into the territory of New Mexico in the '70s, when General Lew Wallace was governor. Music has been combined skillfully and effectively with the drama, which is handled by capable actors under expert direction. Warner.

f LET THEM LIVE—John Howard. Story by Richard Newman. Directed by Harold Young. A story of a young doctor's struggle against unscrupulous politicians during an epidemic of infantile paralysis. The plot becomes somewhat involved but on the whole is rather entertaining. Universal.

f \*LOST HORIZON—Ronald Colman, Jane Wyatt, Edward Everett Horton. Novel by James Hilton. Directed by Frank Capra. Hilton's novel of the fantastic Tibetan valley where civilization was to be preserved when the rest of the world went to pieces, has been transferred to the screen with

(Continued on page 17)



# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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## The Motion Picture and the Scientist

*As seen by DR. CLARENCE C. LITTLE*

*Dr. Little was well qualified to speak on this subject at the twenty-second Annual Conference Luncheon of the National Board of Review last month for he has been very active in the fields of education and research. He has been since 1929 managing director of the American Society for the Control of Cancer. He has served as President of the University of Maine and the University of Michigan and his active affiliation with scientific societies includes the Carnegie Institution, International Congress of Eugenics, Race Betterment Congress, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, New York Academy of Medicine, National Institute of Social Sciences, Society of Experimental Biology and Medicine and others.*

I appreciate very much this chance to discuss with you for a few moments a topic which is of very vital interest to experimental scientists today. I should like to say how much we appreciate not only the excellent technical work which your group is doing, but the fact that it is one of the very few bodies the function of which is to integrate and coordinate an industry and the consumers of that industry. We need more bodies like yours in the United States, not only in science and education, but in all walks of life, bodies which without any axe to grind at all will give their time and advice and energy to coordinating the interests of two groups which might otherwise go ahead and develop in the good old American fashion of being for oneself first, last and all the time.

I suppose it is the heritage of a young, rich country that men should pursue an easy goal as far as they can, and it certainly has been the experience of our country that in its relatively short life men and

women have found direct approaches to their goals relatively easy and intriguing and have not spent time in correlating and coordinating and integrating different fields of human thought.

In the use of pictures for educational purposes we have today a very clear example, I think, of a direct and selfish treatment of the problem. On the one hand you have the producer who is interested in box office receipts, on the other you have the teacher who is interested in preventing a better teacher than he from coming into his classroom. And the combination of these two selfish interests has meant that for a generation America has practically neglected one of the greatest educational mediums that has ever been given to humanity.

A previous speaker said that motion pictures were the only field in which censorship and the question of disloyalty appear. He forgets the teachers oath. And the reason that we have both had it is that we are teachers and people are afraid of what a great teacher can say. They were very much afraid of it at the beginning of the Christian era and they have been afraid of it ever since. We have had many examples of that. And there can be a great deal done today by you and people who feel as you do, who can force the motion picture industry, on the one hand, to enter the field of education and force the teacher, on the other hand, and the school executive to accept that interference and that new element.

Let me give you a single example of a field in which that is sorely needed—engineering education. It is the disgraceful record of engineering education in this country that it is so selfishly conceived and so poorly administered that approximately 40% of the boys who enter an engineering college as freshmen fail to graduate. One of the reasons why that wholesale slaughter of young minds takes place, and it is a slaughter because they are left for dead by the college—are thrown out without any attempt at guidance as to what they should do next, is that these boys who want to be engineers are apt to be practical minded and they see no value whatever in spending time perfecting their English or learning modern languages. They think that mathematics and the sciences which are of immediate applied value are the breath and blood and life of engineering. And they refuse to work in the modern languages. Many of them are failed for that reason.

The most sincere and well-meaning deans and professors of engineering can urge these boys for as long a time as they are in contact with them to learn those subjects and the boys will turn a deaf ear to them. But if the sound pictures brought to every engineering freshman in the United States of America a ten minute talk by a man like Walter Gifford, by a man like Herbert Hoover who knows engineering life, success, power—things that these boys have been taught by the American philosophy to worship—if these men could talk to those boys for ten minutes and tell them that the difference between an ordinary engineer and a superior one is in the fields of this perfection of English and of modern languages those boys would work in these subjects. But education has been so unimaginative that it has never asked men who have made successes of the things that are attempted to be taught to come into the classroom and tell the boys what is needed.

The same way in medicine. If great doctors could say to those boys, "Do not rush in medical school. Take five years. Study biology, sociology, economics. A doctor has to be a business man these days as well as a physician and a healer of people." If these doctors could tell those boys that, it

would prevent tragic failures. And the greatest sign of modern America is that it loves to forget its failures, its human failures.

I think that you are in a position where you can do an immense amount of good for the future of America by exerting the pressure which stops selfish activity on the part of education on the one hand and the industry on the other and forces them both into a union which will bring new thought and new life and new vigor to education in this country today.

One more thing and that deals with the question of science.

I have been for a few years a member of the Committee on Adult Education of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Two of my very good British friends are J. B. S. Haldane and Julian Huxley. These two men if they had been born and brought up in the United States would not have dared, I think, to have been more than scientists. They would not have dared to write on sociological subjects, bringing to the intelligent reader the fruits and achievements of science in a way that convinces the intelligent reader of the basic value of scientific research, because in this country we take ourselves very seriously and a scientist who does what I am doing at this present moment, who attempts to talk about science in any but entirely incomprehensible terms, is losing cast immediately. The moment you make science interesting, popular, happy, optimistic in the United States, you are labeled a shallow, superficial scientist hunting publicity.

It was Louis Agassiz that said no scientist was worth his salt until he could hold an audience of experts spellbound for an indefinite period on the technical phase of his subject; until he could write a magazine article that would interest intelligent people in his subject; and until he could go into a country schoolhouse and hold the attention of a group of fourth or fifth grade children talking about his science and his research.

Americans have been so selfish, so busy earning money or losing it as the case may be, that they have not seen to it that the

*(Continued on page 8)*



# Changing Movies and Censorship

By HAL HODE

*An address delivered by Mr. Hode, Executive Assistant to Mr. Jack Cohn, Vice-President, Columbia Pictures Corp., at the National Board of Review's Annual Conference-Luncheon.*

ANY reference to changing movies such as has been made here today, provides food for thought. Inasmuch as I entered the motion picture business back in 1904, I believe I might be considered as one of the pioneers of the industry. Consequently I believe I am somewhat qualified to speak as an authority on changing movies.

Years have taught me that movies change only as fast as the public intelligence changes. They progress only as fast as censor boards allow them to progress. My work brings me into constant contact with censor boards and so I want to impress upon you the importance of that statement. I have in mind, for example, a picture of considerable sociological import, released by one of the large producing and distributing organizations a few weeks ago and condemned by the censor board of a nearby state. But for the intelligence and the courage of the newly appointed head of that board, this picture would never have been shown in that particular state. Appreciating the importance of the production in question, she took the matter up with the Governor, with the result that the production was passed despite the opposition of her fellow members on the censorship board who had previously voted against her.

There is much we can do in movies that we dare not do. There are social problems which would make tremendously interesting films—films important to all of us both from the standpoint of education and entertainment. Yet the industry is ham-strung because experience has taught it that the “nice Nellies” of both sexes who presume to speak for the public and who have places on censor boards and other political bodies

would prevent the release of such pictures. Occasionally the industry timidly attempts to present such a film, but because it is the steward of moneys invested by stockholders throughout the world, such films are so heavily sugar-coated as to be virtually valueless.

The company with which I am affiliated, Columbia Pictures Corporation, has been one of the very few organizations that has successfully ventured into that field. For example, there is *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, in which Director Frank Capra got over the philosophy which voiced the idea that man is his brother's keeper. Again in *Lost Horizon*, now being released, Capra voices the theory that happiness is purely a state of mind: that Utopia exists if we but accept it in our minds, and in that way make our own individual Utopias.

These films were possible because there was nothing in them that violated the moral ethics of the censor boards. Had they contained the element of what might be termed “raw meat” there is no doubt in my mind as to the fate they would have met.

Sometimes I believe that it is not altogether the censors, or perhaps the intelligence of the people at large, that makes motion picture progress a matter of slow evolution. Rather, it may well be the fault of individuals who possess political power or political contacts but totally lack a sense of humor and proportion. For example, a chairman of one of the censor boards told me of a heated complaint registered by an attorney who was also an intimate friend of the Governor of that state. This lawyer demanded that the censor board condemn every picture in which a member of his profession was depicted in an unfavorable light. By the same token, my own doctor told me that I ought to bring every influence to bear on my own company and the industry of which it is a part, to the end that no doctor ever be shown in an un-

favorable light. My dentist complained that he had frequently seen pictures in which actors portraying the part of dentists were guilty of unethical practices. Each of these estimable gentlemen overlooked the fact that not all members of their respective professions are ethical. Now, if we were to extend this line to all professions it would be impossible to show any individual as the villain of any picture and, as the result, picture making in general would be impossible.

Sometimes these complainants have influence and may be capable of exercising a definite control on production. Mr. Lang,\* who has spoken here today, and who is one of the finest directors in the industry, is conscious of that feeling of restraint. His picture *M*, produced and released some years ago, was one of the finest psychological subjects the screen has ever known. It was so heavily censored in some of the states, however, as to absolutely ruin it for audiences. I can go back further than him and remember other fine pictures which met with the same fate. Recalling these experiences and the vast amount of money sunk into them which was never recouped, the industry naturally hesitates to go in for the so-called "better" picture which the allegedly intelligentsia vociferously demand.

It is for this reason that the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures can be of tremendous benefit to the industry and the public at large. The work it does brings about a radiation of ideas which, in time, helps to create a demand for finer and better films. There is not a company in the film business which has not dropped vast sums into pictures which were ahead of their times solely because censorial intelligence had not yet emerged from the blue-nose era.

During the reception held just prior to this luncheon, I told one of the gentlemen now seated on this dais that every company each year sinks huge sums into so-called prestige pictures. Frankly, these pictures are in effect sops thrown to the intelligentsia. We know beforehand that this group represents a tiny minority and yet we release

these pictures in the hope of placating it and softening its attitude towards the industry. It should not be necessary to lose money on such pictures. They should be eagerly welcomed by the public at large because in the main they are fine productions, stimulating to thought and provocative of discussion. They also represent fine entertainment. That, however, is a matter for education. Perhaps it is something in which you ladies and gentlemen can help us. In the meantime, I know that we have to watch our steps so carefully. Where we offend, we do so unwittingly.

A case in point comes to mind in a picture which Columbia released some years ago. In it, a harmless religio-maniac went about sticking pasters which read "Repent, for the day is at hand." One censor board condemned these sequences as sacrilegious. It never occurred to these puritanical-minded officials that religion might well have a place in pictures and if pictures used it as a theme it might be better for the industry and public at large.

This same board demanded, and got away with its demand, that the song "Brighten the Corner Where You Are" be eliminated from the picture in question. Although it was a purely secular song and, as such, was contained in none of the hymn books, they insisted that it be eliminated because it sounded like a hymn and therefore was sacrilegious.

Does that sound silly? Nevertheless, these illustrations represent some of the little pin pricks which give the industry pause and make us wonder whether we dare attempt the brave and ambitious things we are so anxious to do. Producers have a lot of fun poked at them by professional and amateur critics. We grin and bear it even though we know how unfair these attacks are—unfair, because the blame is not ours. Rather is it yours as part of the public-at-large, because in reading such criticisms and in listening to them, you eventually come to believe them, with the result that the good things the industry has accomplished, and is accomplishing, are overlooked while the importance of the unimportant things is emphasized and exaggerated.

\* Mr. Fritz Lang's address at the Conference-Luncheon appeared in the February issue of the Magazine.



# An American at a British Film Pageant

By MARGARET ROWE CARRINGTON JONES

*Mrs. Carrington Jones who is Program Chairman of the Better Films Council of Memphis, Tenn., maintains an active interest in the motion picture both at home and abroad. This report of the latter which she made to the Memphis Council we are pleased to pass on to a larger Council audience through these pages.*

**O**NCE, soon after the War, the old aunt whom I was visiting in England consented to go with me to the cinema. It was her first experience at the movies. The play was Barrie's *The Admirable Crichton*. Aunt Rosita was altogether surprised and amazed. First, the audience, crowded with the working classes was a shock—these people should have been out, if not on jobs, at least digging in their kitchen gardens or knitting their husband's socks. A crowded cinema hall, between tea and dinner, she said, was a sure sign of the decadence of the British race.

And the movie itself, which she enjoyed tremendously had some mistakes in it which seemed blatant to her British eyes. One, I remember, was that the little kitchen maid sat next to the butler at the table. Such a procedure, Aunt Rosita kept informing me, was impossible, unheard of and ridiculous. Servants sit according to rank in an English servants hall just as their masters do in the dining room.

And Aunt Rosita, who really went eager to forget herself in the new experience of movie-going almost forgot to enjoy the show because of spending most of the evening proudly pointing out the mistakes which the American producers made.

In England on a visit this past summer however, I found the country quite movie-minded. The servants and working people talked about American actors and actresses avidly, while even the gentry go frequently to the Cinema, and know more than they care to admit about the actors that they see. What is more, they are not averse to putting a few questions themselves about that amazing center of the upside-down universe, Hollywood.

It was very natural, therefore, at the British Dramatic Festival in Malvern, where actors and playwrights and critics get together, and Mr. Shaw is the jocund deity, that the sixth Pageant of British Films should be running simultaneously with the legitimate theatre in a moving picture palace incorporated into the Festival Play Building.

The moving pictures showed continuously from 2:30 until 10:30 at night. There was a much longer break between shows than we have, and the audience was much more apt to come on time for the beginning of each performance than an average American audience does.

The prices interested me. Downstairs they were from six pence (about 12c.) for the close-up seats, to one shilling and four pence (about 30c.). While the gallery, which they call the circle, and which, as I remember, is reached by a dark, steep and winding stair, is more expensive. You pay one and six (about 35c.) to two shillings for the privilege of climbing up there. Day and night prices, so far as I know, are the same. And the seats are exceedingly comfortable.

Another thing that interested me was the shorts. I was only in Malvern for a week, as are most of the unprofessional visitors. During that week a new film was shown each day and I went to four of the six. Although this program was supposed to be arranged for the weekly visitors as a gala affair, presenting the best in British movie entertainment, and although the features were changed daily, that theatre showed the same shorts the whole week long. The summer was unusually cold in any case, but the shorts included, first a trip to a resort in Switzerland and next Minnie Mouse skating.

Day after day, as I walked in from the cold outside to the none-too-warm theatre, and saw the train pull through the snow-bound Swiss tunnels, and knew so well on which swing of the perfectly synchronized music Minnie would bump her cold little tail into the cold hole in the ice, I thought that

the most unenterprising of American managers would have chosen better shorts and would have changed them for such an occasion.

The pictures shown, advertised to be fifteen of Britain's finest films, including four special releases, were: *Whom the Gods Love*, a story based on the life of Mozart, starring Victor Hopper and John Loder, both actors very popular with the British public. That ran a week. Then came the week when I was in Malvern.

On Monday, Richard Dix in *The Tunnel*. This was a story of the building of a trans-Atlantic tunnel. When it was completed special speeches, etc. were given in the British Parliament and the American Senate. In the Senate, the President spoke a few trite words which were intercepted at appropriate intervals by the American Senators (played with great dignity by the all-British cast) calling out exceedingly English "Here, Here!" just as the members of the English Parliament do. I thought how funny it was—and my mind went back to Aunt Rosita at *The Admirable Crichton*.

On Tuesday, they showed Robert Donat in *39 Steps*. I missed it. Also I am sorry to say, I missed George Arliss in *The Gov'nor*. They say it was splendid.

On Thursday, I thoroughly enjoyed the British comedians Walls and Lynn in a display of native humor: *Fighting Stock*. The rather high class British audience, roaring their appreciation, added much to my own fun. It probably would fall flat in New York.

Then on Friday, came a poignant little navy story beautifully done, that was bound to pull at all British heart-strings: John Mills in *Forever England*. I wept happily through it all.

Finally, on Saturday, they showed Jessie Matthews in *First a Girl*, a play not British in any sense. If it were shown here, I would have rated it poor on my Better Films card. It was the story of a dancing girl who dressed as a boy and, after many adventures, finally changed back in order to marry the man she loved. It might have been good done by Americans, but it did not suit the British type.

The other plays to be shown were: John Garrick in *Turn of the Tide*; Gene Gerrand in *No Monkey Business*; Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. in *The Amateur Gentleman*; Walls and Lynn (the comedians again) in *Foreign Affairs*; Elizabeth Bergner in *Escape Me Never*; Jack Buchanan in *Brewster's Millions*.

My conclusion, from these and other movies that I saw was that each nation is going to have to stick to its type more. The British can do a play like *Nine Days a Queen*, or that sweet *Forever England* with a finish and a fervour and a stamp of conviction that we can rarely match. On the other hand, there is no use in their trying to do glamorous things. They are not glamorous. They are tried and true.

Again, natives ought to play and direct pictures done in their own land—we are too apt to slip up on minor details and the audience remembers the slip more than any parts of the play.

Finally, humour, except the most elemental, is national. Go abroad if you want to weep, but stay at home to laugh.

And, just between ourselves, the moving picture is just as American as ice-tea. The others may subsidize and struggle and imitate and develop some excellent stuff, but all in all I pick an American film for a good show.

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## The Motion Picture and the Scientist

(Continued from page 4)

guardians of truth, the scientists, have democratized that subject as they should. In a tired, overfed, stupid civilization we have neglected the guardianship of truth. We have no right to do it any longer. And those of you in your position will do a great service to the future, your children and their children, if you force the scientists of America to give the truth to the people in a form that the people can understand and enjoy because we need truth, truth all the time, and we do not get it. And it is from your scientists that you can get it.



# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS

## DEPARTMENT

*This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of Exceptional and Honorable*

*Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.*

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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*The apparent neglect of American films in this issue is due to the piling up of foreign pictures which had to be dealt with while they were still current. "Exceptional," in the sense in which this department uses it, includes "unusual" in its meaning.*

## Elephant Boy

*Adapted by John Collier in collaboration with Akos Tolnay and Marcia de Silva from Rudyard Kipling's "Jungle Book" tale, "Toomai of the Elephants." Directed by Robert Flaherty and Zoltan Korda, photographed by Osmond Borradale. Produced by London Film Productions, distributed by United Artists.*

### The Cast

Toomai .....	Sabu
His father .....	W. E. Holloway
Petersen .....	Walter Hudd
Muchua Appa .....	Allan Jeayes
Rham Lahl .....	Bruce Gordon
Hunter .....	D. J. Williams
Commissioner .....	Hyde White

FOR the first time, Robert Flaherty has put himself within the restrictions of a story-book plot in this film. Usually he goes to life itself—to some way of living out of the beaten track, like that of the Eskimos, the South Sea Islanders, or the people of Aran Isle—and lets the simple relations between man and nature be his story. Social complications have engaged him very little. The results—in *Nanook*, *Moana*, *Man of Aran*—have been annals of primitive family life against a background of earth, sea and the elements, far removed from ordinary movie drama, virile and lyrical and lovely.

Something of natural beauty as well as something of that thing called by the ugly word "documentary" had to be sacrificed in this Kipling tale about the boy who followed the old elephant out into the jungle at night

and saw the fabulous elephant dance. The story had to be expanded, and the expansion seems quite Kiplingesque if one hasn't too definite a memory of the Jungle Books. Toomai, the Indian son of a long line of elephant-keepers, whose ambition is to be a great elephant hunter, is made to suffer from the killing of his father by a tiger, and from seeing old Kala Nag, the wise elephant whom he has ridden since babyhood, given into the care of a cruel keeper. It is the elephant's revolt against this cruelty that drives him out into the jungle, not that mysterious intuition of the Kipling fable, and by following him Toomai finds a herd of wild elephants—which rounds out the plot for a happy ending, for the main job for everybody concerned, and especially for Sahib Petersen, is to get a lot of new elephants to be tamed.

This plot business is all to the good for those who need plots to be interested in, and doesn't get particularly in the way for those who find their fascination in the elephants, the boy Toomai, the glimpses of India and the jungle. Some of the minor characters may seem to have come from a casting office, with beards stuck on with gum instead of being nature's growth, but they do their bit toward keeping the story moving and obtrude very little in the splendid panorama which in retrospect seems to be so much vaster than some of its details would appear able to add up to. For Flaherty has accomplished his customary magic and recreated

one of those far-off places the ordinary person can only read and dream about, and put it vividly and beautifully before our eyes.

From the opening scene of early morning, with little Toomai awaking on the edge of the wakening jungle and huge old Kala Nag towering above him, to the final crash of the lined-up elephants with lifted trunks trumpeting their salute to Toomai of the Elephants, this is a saga of a noble beast and his service to man. The fine old hero, Kala Nag, so strong he can uproot a tree or knock down a house, so gentle that a creeping baby can play in perfect safety about his feet, seems like something mythical in his strength and wisdom, something that arouses a wonder why he submits to captivity and servitude. And the boy—a thirteen-year-old Indian lad named Sabu who is completely the personification of *boy*—seems to represent that quality in man which the elephant is willing to submit to and serve, with miraculous understanding and a serene, majestic sense of humor. That tiny eye set in the side of the massive head—

You see, the picture sets one marveling and pondering on unanswerable questions about man and beast, wild life and tame life, civilization and the jungle. It also—and not by telling an incredible tale but by showing something that has to be believed—fills one with a vast respect for one of the most superior live things that walk the earth.

But these thoughts come as afterthoughts. There is no time for them while the film is unfolding, while Toomai takes his impish ride through the village stopping to steal—with Kala Nag's help—a melon from a roof; while the keepers scrub their elephants in the river and a baby elephant tumbles like a hungry kitten around and around its mother in the water; while the hunters assemble and march forth on their hunt; while the stockade is being built for the wild elephants they hope to find, and the tiger comes creeping in upon the camp at night; while Kala Nag, in rage against his cruel keeper, crashes his way out of captivity into the misty jungle, and Toomai follows and makes him carry him. Least of all can one stop to think when all the wild elephants, coming together from far places by some instinct

incomprehensible to man, dance that legendary dance that man is supposed never to have seen, shaking the earth and the air with their thunderous stampings and trumpeting all through the night, and at dawn leave a huge space where the jungle has been trampled into solid earth; or when the hunters round up the herd that Toomai has so strangely discovered and drive it back to the stockade in one of the most thrilling and beautiful spectacles the camera has ever caught.

So for thinkers or amusement seekers *Elephant Boy* is a rich and lovable film—a real movie that needs few words to tell itself because the pictures (beautiful in themselves as pure photography) tell so much. Like all first-rate movies it has something to hold and satisfy the most varied kinds of audience. Just an animal picture? As much like the ordinary animal picture as a fine piece of literature is like a bare newspaper story.—J.S.H.

(Rated exceptional)

## The Golem

*Scenario by Andre-Paul Antoine, directed by Julien Duvivier, photographed by Vich and Stalich, setting by A. Andreiev. Edited and titled by Martin J. Lewis and Herman G. Weinberg. Produced in Prague by A-B Films. Distributed in the United States by Metropolis.*

### The Cast

*Rudolph II, Emperor of Prague* . . . Harry Baur  
*Lang, his Chancellor* . . . . . Roger Karl  
*Friedrich, Prefect of Police* . . . Gaston Jacquet  
*Countess Strada* . . . . . Germaine Aussey  
*Trignac, an antique dealer* . . . Roger Duchesne  
*Toussaint, his servant* . . . . . Aimos  
*Rabbi Jacob* . . . . . Charles Dorat  
*Rachel, his wife* . . . . . Jany Holt  
*The Golem* . . . . . Ferdinand Hart

ONE of the memorable silent films that came out of Germany, where it was made in 1920, was *The Golem*, of which Paul Wegener was both the director and the chief actor. It told a mediaeval





*The Rabbi's wife brings the Golem to life.*

legend of the ghetto in Prague, the home of one of the oldest Jewish communities in the world, of a creature made of clay and endowed with life by a Rabbi, which was called the Golem. "Golem" is the Hebrew word for "strong". This creation was made to be the protector of the ghetto, and it performed this duty faithfully till it went mad and destructive, and had to be turned to earth again. In the old film it was left, at the end, a lump of rock in a field, with a child picking flowers that had grown up around it.

This new French film, founded on the same legendary figure, begins with the inanimate stone-man hidden in the attic of a synagogue in the ghetto. There has been a prophesy that it will come to life again to help the Jews in their greatest need, and that need seems fast approaching. Rudolph, the

half-crazy emperor of Prague, is persecuting them frightfully, bedeviled by his scheming chancellor and his equally scheming mistress, and haunted ceaselessly by his terror that the Golem will return and kill him. He has collected all the quacks and magicians and astrologers of Europe in his court, trying through their arts to find assuagement of his fears. Both his chancellor and his mistress—he to strengthen his hold upon the emperor, she to compel the emperor to marry her—are trying to get possession of the statue, in order to use its threat to promote their ambitions. The chancellor fails and the countess succeeds, and hides the Golem in her palace. There the emperor happens upon it, and vainly begs the unresponsive image for its friendship. This meeting increases his madness, and he tells his chancellor about it, but he

cannot remember where it happened. The chancellor resolves to wipe out this menace of the Jews and orders the ghetto burned and its dwellers thrown into the palace dungeon to be fed to lions. The wife of a young Rabbi who has been imprisoned and tortured to make him reveal the secret of the Golem, finds the statue and brings it to life by making the cabalistic mark upon its forehead and uttering the necessary magic words, and the creature, breaking its chains, crashes through the dungeon, releasing the prisoners and the lions, marches up through the ball-room where the nobles are gathered, and on to the ghetto. The Jews are saved, the chancellor killed, the emperor abdicates and his brother—destined to be a kindlier ruler—is coming to take the throne. The young Rabbi returns the statue to dust again, for its mission has been fulfilled.

The picture revives the power and terror of this ancient legend with remarkable force, and along with the legend a vivid idea of the dark life in an old-world city during a particularly strange age of superstition and intrigue. It has the fascination of an old tale told by a master story-teller. And in the midst of its romantic figures and legendary figures is the immensely live figure of the insane and tortured emperor, superbly acted by Harry Baur. Baur is one of the best actors on the screen today, and he must be a very busy one, for he seems to be in most of the best films that are coming from Europe. There was *Poil de Carotte* a few years ago, later *Les Misérables* and the French *Crime and Punishment*, currently he can be seen as Herod in *Golgotha* as well as in *The Golem*, and there is his splendid *Beethoven* which ought to be ready soon for a showing in this country.

*The Golem* is a striking reminder that some of the best films in the world are now being made in France, and that Julien Duvivier is one of the world's best directors. His range and versatility can be seen from four of his pictures that have reached America—*Poil de Carotte*, *Maria Chapdelaine*, *Golgotha* and *The Golem*. Only a great talent could accomplish such varied things so well (Rated exceptional)

J.S.H.

## Golgotha

*Produced and directed by Julian Duvivier; original music by Jacques Ibert. Distributed by Golgotha Corporation.*

### The Cast

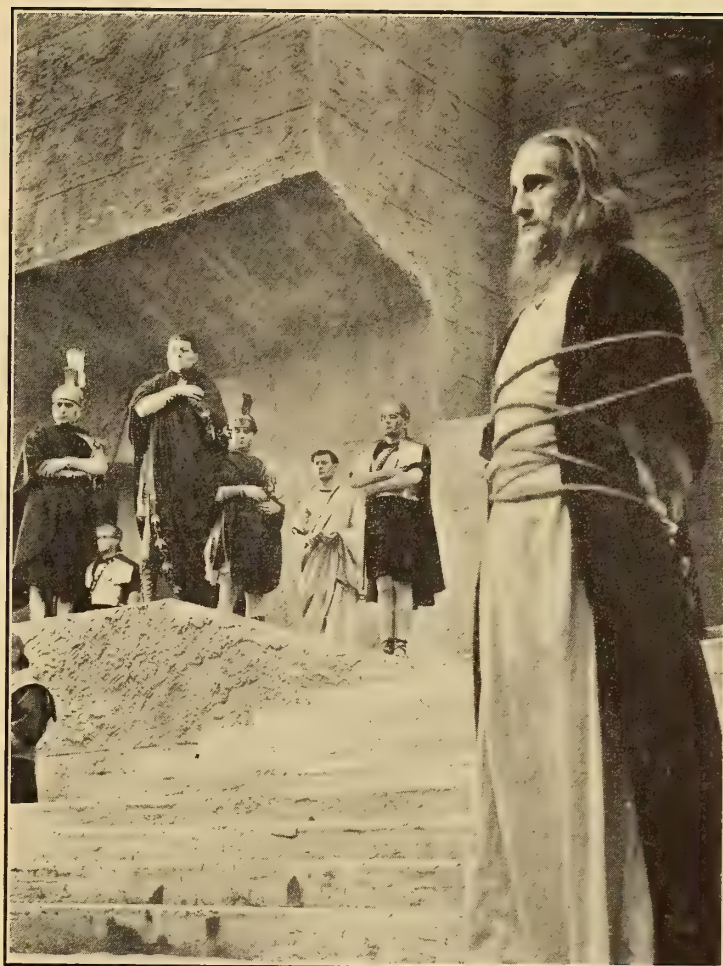
<i>Jesus of Nazareth</i> .....	Robert Le Vigan
<i>Pilate</i> .....	Jean Gabin
<i>Herod</i> .....	Harry Baur
<i>Caiaphas</i> .....	Charles Granval
<i>Annas</i> .....	Andre Bacque
<i>Peter</i> .....	Hubert Prelier
<i>Judas</i> .....	Lucas Gridoux
<i>Gerson</i> .....	Van Daele
<i>Claudia</i> .....	Edwige Feuillere
<i>Mary</i> .....	Juliette Verneuil

IT has remained for the films to present one of the most realistic interpretations of the Passion of the Savior, and of the events that, probably, in the historical sense, crowded in on and added up in the narrative of this most moving and haunting of tragic histories. It is possible that not all those of different faiths will think alike about this film of the Figure the Western World has taken and accepted for its spiritual ideal. It is natural that there will be some conflict of opinion. To those of sensitive religious minds, the propriety of presenting the person of Christ on stage or screen may again arise as a question mark, especially as pertaining to this film of Duvivier's, so objective, so consistent, telling, and provocative. It will depend, to others of an equal sensitivity, all on how it is done. We are living in modern times, which only means the times of our own day, which are investigating times, and it seems fair to concede that the motion picture can well be one of our microscopes, and, because of its peculiarly adaptable nature, one of our telescopes looking backward to capture ourselves, our furies, confusions and mistakes, and looking forward to elucidate our fate as muddling mortal human beings. From this point of view the films appear to have as much right as any other form of expression, painting, literature, music, to project the basic and transcendent story of the Christian world, through the gift of the artistic imagination.

*Golgotha* is a witness to the power and privilege of the screen to make of its moving images a record, in this case realistic and often terrible, because it is indelibly touched



*Christ  
brought  
before  
Pontius Pilate.  
Robert Le Vigan  
as Christ,  
Jean Gabin  
as Pilate.*



with the venom of human hate, treachery, and cold-blooded calculation, of Jesus of Nazareth in the time of His bitter, prefigured experience at the hands of those He came to save. Through the concept and direction of Duvivier, this film, with great economy, with brilliant technique, with scenic magnificence, of which this director takes no advantage to underscore the merely spectacular, affords a pictorial representation, direct, brutal and arresting, of what happened between the moment Jesus, with the palms waved and scattered before Him, entered Jerusalem, and that hour when He struggled with His cross up the steep hill-wise roadway to be stretched upon it and nailed there and lifted into the darkening air, giving testimonial as the Redeemer.

Here is an artist's film, done one would say, with small concern, despite the lavishness, care and cost, for the strictures of the popular taste. But surely what any spectator will take away, religious or other feeling aside, must be a feeling of having witnessed a great cinematic interpretation of what Jesus endured. *Golgotha* rises above any commercial consideration, as it should, onto a plane of pity for gallantry itself, for which we, so often sadly, pretend to show our faith, and so onto a critical level where we may see how cruel we are. Seen through the artist's eye, which here for the first time in motion pictures has perceived those forces political and economic, almost in a documentary light, which took the Voyager from Galilee with whip and thorn

and nail and set Him on the cross, *Golgotha* says this was done not so much because they hated Him as that His tormentors were distrustful of one another being at a partisan game among themselves, and Jesus was innocent and undefended.

Duvivier's film is alive, intense. It is hard, human and cruel, bespeaking no heed to compromise. As no motion picture, certainly, has ever done, and few modern works in other mediums could do, it visualizes the great story it sets out to tell with a realism often so compelling that the film at times is hard to bear watching—which is the best tribute to its vitality and to its art.

The players comprise a notable cast, but the object has been to subordinate the individual to the purpose of the whole which is to give the effect not of an acted play but of something that is happening before one's very eyes. The film is sound-dialogued in English.

W. A. B.

(Rated exceptional)

## Razumov

Adapted from "Under Western Eyes" by Joseph Conrad. Directed by Marc Allegret. Produced by Andre Daven. Music by Auric. Distributed by Garrison Films.

### Cast

Razumov .....	Pierre Fresnay
Haldin .....	Jean-Louis Barrault
Mikulin .....	Jacques Copeau
Mikulin's Agent .....	Pierre Renoir
Lespara .....	Michel Simon
Nathalie Haldin .....	Daniele Parola
Razumov's Father .....	Roger Karl
Nikita .....	Gabrio

**R**AZUMOV, like Dostoievsky's Raskolnikov, is an honor graduate of the imperial university of the Tsar's government. Unlike the impoverished hero of *Crime and Punishment*, however, Razumov faces a brilliant academic future. When, in an attempt to protect his own reputation, he unwittingly and unintentionally sends a revolutionary fellow-student, Haldin, to the firing-squad, he finds that the bottom has dropped out of his world. He becomes the victim of two struggling forces, neither of

which he sympathizes with, but rather than serve as a spy for the Tsarist chief of police, he confesses his betrayal of Haldin to the revolutionaries and finally welcomes the death which one of them meets out to him.

The French attraction for Dostoievsky is well-known. If then, the above summary sounds more like the Russian than the English novelist, it is only because the adaptors of this film did their best to make it so. With all deference to Conrad, their success is complete. *Razumov* resembles *Under Western Eyes* as much as von Sternberg's *Crime and Punishment* of last season resembled its namesake. But the honor is not all the adaptors'. It is, in fact, chiefly due the cast.

Pierre Fresnay's Razumov is the most distinguished interpretation among the several finished ones which grace the picture. Watching his disinterested student growing into a compassionate, then a desperate, finally tragic hero, one has the rare pleasure of seeing a performance consistently, and not intermittently, excellent. One of the most famous names of the French theatre, Jacques Copeau, director of the Compagnie des Vingt, plays the chief of police, Razumov's nemesis. (It may not be irrelevant to mention that he directed his own dramatization of *The Brothers Karamazov* for the Theatre Guild in New York some seasons back.) The full power of his performance does not emerge until after the ending, such is his restraint, but as the unrelenting pursuer of the enemies of Authority, he creates a figure impossible to shake from one's memory. Michel Simon, usually seen in comic roles, plays the shaggy leader of the revolutionaries — a difficult type which he makes wholly sympathetic; and Jean-Louis Barrault as the impassioned Haldin gives an entirely individual and clear-cut interpretation.

The one false note is the single actress in the film, Daniele Parola as Nathalie the sister of Haldin, who gives a wide-eyed and shallow performance which is fatal in such company. Since her role adds little to the story, it seems even more curious she was not omitted altogether.



Director Marc Allegret has added another to the recent series of exceptional French films. With Julien Duvivier, Jacques Feyder, and Pierre Chenal, he is helping to fill the void left in the French cinema by René Clair's departure to the greener pastures of Great Britain. R. G.  
(Rated exceptional)

## The Wedding of Palo

*Written and produced in Greenland by Dr. Knud Rasmussen; directed by Dr. Rasmussen and Friedrich Dalsheim; photographed by Hans Scheib and Walter Traut; original music by Emil Reesen, played by the Symphony Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Copenhagen. Distributed by J. H. Hoffberg Company. The players in the film are all natives of Angmagssalik of eastern Greenland.*

NOW and then something in motion pictures wholly refreshing comes along, and few people have the opportunity to enjoy it, because they cannot see it for want of wider distribution.

*The Wedding of Palo* is such a film. Produced and directed by the late Dr. Knud Rasmussen, among the Greenland people he knew and loved, it turns up on the screen as a beautifully photographed, tender and endearing tribute to those neighbors of ours in the far North whom we think of as eaters of blubber, worshippers of heathen gods and otherwise outlandishly unattractive and uncouth.

The lords of life be with you, says this film—the laws of the tribe, of the family life, and of the chaste and picturesque rites of human love. It is an important film, taking us into the warm life of another people. It tells, so simply, but how tellingly, directly and wisely, of the love of Naravana for her man Palo. She has flaunted him and flirted with, and led on, the villain of the piece, refreshingly not quite in the accepted motion picture mode, only to give the latter the cold shoulder before it is over, forsaking her home to marry her lover. How Palo sought Narvana, fought, not with swords but with drums, with his rival, and how he almost died of his treachery-given wound before he took his frail boat and went to fetch Naravana home through the wintry seas, the film tells. The sequence of the drum-beating

duel between Palo and his rival while each seeks to insult the other as bitterly as possible—that the tribe, gathered around, may judge the winner, gives the kind of fragment of folk custom that has given such authentic interest and drama to the films of Robert Flaherty, as that of the dance of the Siva in *Moana*.

There are such entrancing incidents woven into the story as those of the polar bear on the ice floes, plunging off into the sea and speared for food (poor hungry Greenlanders), and of the coming of the fleet of native kayaks (perilous little boats which only a supreme water-art could keep upright and afloat), added to a whole gallery of the sea-daring people who live because they have to and because they love life (you hear their laughter, chatter, and serious discourse, because it is a sound film)—and you begin to feel as if you were meeting friends, liking them well, and wanting to know them better. A new society of good and joyous folk is opened out to you.

From the background of nature, you get a visual feeling of the same turns of seasons that affect us mortals here who live in warm, safe houses, look comfortably out of windows when it blows sleet or cold, and walk pavements when it shines; you feel the joy that spring brings, with its melting ice and the faint, delicate spread of bright flowers and colored mosses breeding in the rocks, and the wild birds mating and vibrant, flying up among the crags in a rapid white pattern of wings; it takes you through the warm brief summer when one can get off greasy winter garments and see one's own skin, when the lambs come down and tickle your hand; and then into the bitter season, that follows, when one has to take flimsy shelter—when winter rages. Behind the simplicity of the story you get all the shapes of that lonely and sterile, yet somehow lovely, country, lived in by people full of life's joy, struggle and primitive meaning.

A charming film, this *Wedding of Palo*, true, creative. Somehow, as tales of primitive people, when told by a person with the gift of interpretation, sometimes are, this became a motion picture work of simple, moving and exciting art in the hands of Dr.

Rasmussen, who after all was just an explorer who had never produced in Hollywood—to which Naravana, by the way, would do full credit as a glamour girl. The Greenlanders prove themselves to be more than good actors—they are able to narrate their own lives, with candor, beauty, and

total absence of self-consciousness. The original music by Emil Reesen adds much to the enchantment and interpretive character of *Palo*.

See this film if it ever comes your way.

W. A. B.

(Rated exceptional)

## Critical Comment

*Under this heading pictures will be discussed that in the judgment of the Exceptional Photoplays Committee do not gain the rating of Exceptional yet possess qualities that we have found our readers are interested in having talked about.*

### History Caught in the Making

NEWS reels are the picture documents of future histories, and a remarkable proof of it is *Tsar to Lenin*, a compilation put together by Max Eastman to show his version of the Russian revolution. Herman Axelbank spent thirteen years collecting the bits of film of which it is made, and they came from all sorts of sources—French, German, English, Japanese, as well as Russian. There are even scenes made by the Tsar himself. They cover, as the title indicates, the period from the imperial, pre-war days, to the overthrow of Kerensky and the final establishment of the Bolshevik regime.

Hitherto we have had our film versions of the Russian revolution made by Soviet producers, with their odd but logical theory that history can be what you want it to be. In particular their theory that Trotsky, by being cut out of their films, is made nonexistent. As if an American historian, disapproving (let us say) of Jefferson, or Hamilton, made believe they had never existed. This film, trying to restore the balance, almost overdoes it, making Trotsky completely obliterate the less spectacular men who worked so effectively on the Soviet committees, a co-equal hero with Lenin. But this is no great flaw, except to strong partisans, in a surprisingly unbiased exposition of the revolution. It is certainly anti-Tsar (though it makes the Tsar one of the most pathetic figures in history) and pro-revolution, but in dealing with the revolutionaries it seems to try quite hard not to take sides.

This is the best use of documentary films to record history, with historical intent, that we have seen. But it proves that history is not an abstract thing but something made by an historian. And an historian is human. With film, as with words, there is selection, combination, ordering—invariably an individual expressing his own predilections and points of view. So we are no more likely to get history made into an exact science in the movies than in books.

### A Japanese Film

FEW people are aware that Japan makes more movies than any other country except the United States, though her film industry is still extremely young. The first present-day Japanese film to be given a showing in New York is *Kimiko*, and it is a remarkably interesting film, not from its technique, which is quite like that of the average good Hollywood picture, but because it is the first revelation (and it is a revelation) to the untravelled American of what life in contemporary Japan is like. It is based on a novel called "Two Wives", which tells of a man who found life with his high-brow, poet-wife too much of a strain and went to live with a geisha—a simple, loyal woman who let him work as he wanted to work and made him happy. The picture presents the situation when his oldest daughter reached the marrying age, and the co-operation of both her parents was necessary for her marriage arrangements. The daughter's attempt to bring her father and mother together again was very enlightening to her.



A simple and human story altogether. It shows what changes modern, industrialized Japan has made and is making in the outlook of its people, but most interestingly of all it shows, as no amount of reading could, how little difference between East and West (in spite of Mr. Kipling) there is in the ordinary human emotions and decencies. The foreignness of appearances becomes negligible almost immediately—though a continuous undercurrent of comparison between our customs and theirs remains as a decidedly interesting element—and the inner universality of human nature makes the story as near to us as if it had happened among our neighbors.

The circulation of this film in America would be educative in the best sense. Not as propaganda, but as a corrective of misconceptions and prejudices. Here, once more, the motion picture speaks a universal language.

## Selected Pictures Guide

(Continued from page 2)

pictorial lavishness, sacrificing some of its fantasy but adding entertaining qualities that will give it more popular appeal. An astonishing and interesting film. Suggested for church, school and library use. Columbia.

- f **MAN WHO FOUND HIMSELF, THE**—John Beal, Joan Fontaine. Novel "Wings of Mercy" by Alice F. Curtis. Directed by Lew Landers. An unfortunate and undeserved scandal drives a young doctor out of the profession but a series of romantic happenings brings him back. A pleasant and rather jolly handling of the plot, with a new and likeable heroine. RKO-Radio.

- f **\*MAYTIME**—Jeannette MacDonald, Nelson Eddy, John Barrymore. Operetta by Rida Johnson Young. Directed by Robert Z. Leonard. A delightful operetta produced without the stiffness and staginess that so often goes with such stories. Lovely and sunny, romantic, with a touch of pathos—and remarkably good music, as well as some special technical excellences. It is the story of an opera singer. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

- m **MIDNIGHT COURT**—John Litel, Ann Dvorak. Screenplay by Donn Ryan. Directed by Frank McDonald. About a disillusioned lawyer who becomes a mouthpiece for racketeers 'till he can't stomach it any

longer. It moves at a smart pace, with some vigorous performances. Warner.

- f **MIDNIGHT TAXI**—Brian Donlevy, Frances Drake, Alan Dinehart. Screenplay by Borden Chase. Directed by Eugene Forde. A G-men in search of counterfeiters story, helped enormously by good writing, direction and acting. 20th Century-Fox.

- f **NANCY STEELE IS MISSING**—Victor McLaglen, Walter Connolly, Peter Lorre. Novel by Charles Francis Coe. Directed by George Marshall. The story of a kidnapping that worked out differently than planned. Well-knit drama, with first rate direction and acting, and more important overtones than usual in such tales. 20th Century-Fox.

- m **PERSONAL PROPERTY**—Jean Harlow, Robert Taylor. Play "Man in Possession" by H. M. Harwood. Directed by W. S. Van Dyke. A young man's pursuit of his brother's fiancée, and how he prevented a marriage for money. Farce comedy, with more talk than action—some of it witty, some of it broad. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

- f **QUALITY STREET**—Katharine Hepburn, Franchot Tone. Novel by Sir James Barrie. Directed by George Stevens. A light drama combining both romance and comedy. It tells the story of a girl who assumes a dual identity to get even with a man who left her ten years before to follow the fortunes of war. The locale is England during the early part of the 19th century. The costumes, settings and musical accompaniment deserve particular mention. Suggested for library use. RKO-Radio.

- f **READY, WILLING AND ABLE**—Ruby Keeler, Ross Alexander. Saturday Evening Post story by Richard Macaulay. Directed by Ray Enright. A musical show which is not any too good—the music is only fair, but the comedy is good and the acting of the two stars carries the picture. Warner.

- f **ROMANCE AND RICHES**—Cary Grant, Mary Brian. Novel "The Amazing Quest of Mr. Ernest Bliss" by E. Phillips Oppenheim. Directed by Alfred Zeisler. The story of a wealthy man who gives up his wealth and works for a year to win a wager, and thereby a wife. Grand National.

- f **SEVENTH HEAVEN**—Simone Simon, James Stewart. Play by Austin Strong. Directed by Henry King. A re-make of the old favorite—the Paris street-cleaner and the frightened, abused girl to whom he brought love and courage. 20th Century-Fox.

- fj **\*SILENT BARRIERS**—Richard Arlen, Lilli Palmer. Novel "The Great Divide" by Alan Sullivan. Directed by Milton Ros-

ner. A vigorous story of the building of the Canadian Pacific Railroad, with plenty of action, outdoors and interesting characters. An excellent picture of its kind, with more than the usual amount of historical authenticity. Suggested for schools and libraries. Gaumont-British.

- f STEP LIVELY JEEVES—Arthur Treacher, Patricia Ellis. Screenplay by Frances Hyland based on P. G. Wodehouse's character "Jeeves." Directed by Eugene Forde. An amusing story of an English valet who believes he has inherited a fortune, and coming to America he becomes involved with some crooks. Plenty of action and some excellent comedy. 20th Century-Fox.

- f SWING HIGH SWING LOW—Carole Lombard, Fred MacMurray. Play by George M. Watters and Arthur Hopkins. Directed by Mitchel Leissen. Romantic drama concerned with a young girl's efforts to make a famous trumpet player out of a lazy boy. Some good music and excellent comedy. Paramount.

- f THAT MAN'S HERE AGAIN—Tom Brown, Mary McGuire, Hugh Herbert. Screenplay by I. A. R. Wylie. Directed by Louis King. A light and entertaining story of an elevator boy in a swanky Park Avenue apartment who befriends a penniless girl and her baby. First National.

- f TOP OF THE TOWN—Doris Nolan, George Murphy. Screenplay by Lou Brock. Directed by Ralph Murphy. A lavish production with almost a fantastic finale. A musical comedy done on a grandiose scale, with plenty of zip and swing. The song and dance numbers are excellent and the acting and direction first class. Plenty of wholesome comedy. Universal.

- f 23½ HOURS LEAVE—James Ellison, Terry Walker. Novel by Mary Roberts Rinehart. Directed by John G. Blystone. A comedy-romance about a sergeant and a general's daughter in the early war-days of 1917. Lively as life in the barracks, and Ellison is an attractive singer. Grand National.

- f WAIKIKI WEDDING—Bing Crosby, Shirley Ross. Story by Don Hartman. Directed by Frank Tuttle. An entertaining and highly amusing story of Hawaii in which a girl is employed by a pineapple concern to write her impressions of romantic Hawaii which she finds only dull and uninteresting until the romantic Bing comes along. Excellent dancing and singing, and good comedy supplied by Bob Burns and Martha Raye. Paramount.

- jf WESTBOUND MAIL—Charles Starrett, Rosalind Keith. Story by Peter B. Kyne. Directed by Folner Blangsted. A story of stagecoach days in the West, and why a young post-mistress became the object of a

dangerous plot. Good outdoor melodrama. Columbia.

- f WHEN LOVE IS YOUNG—Virginia Bruce, Kent Taylor. McCail Magazine story "Class Prophecy" by Eleanor Griffen. Directed by Harold Mohr. A pleasing story of a small town girl who makes good in the big city. An old theme but well acted and nicely handled. Universal.

#### FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILMS

- f KIMIKO—Sachiko Chiba. Novel "Two Wives" by Minoru Nakano. Directed by Mikio Naruse. A charming and interesting picture of Japanese life with Japanese dialogue and English subtitles. It should be not only entertaining but revealing to American audiences, creating a friendly feeling for a people about whom we know so little. International Film Bureau. See Exceptional Photoplays Department, page 16.

- f SODER OM LANDSVAGEN (South of the Highway)—Edvard Persson. Directed by Gideon Wahlberg. An amusing comedy (in Swedish with English titles) of life on a farm in Southern Sweden, the plot turning upon a knavish scheme to blackmail the farmer into making his daughter wed. Well produced and directed, with excellent actors. Scandinavian.

- f VINTRIGA STROVTAG I HARJEDALEN (Winter Excursion in Harjedalen)—Winter travelogue. Scandinavian.

- f VITA VAREN (White Spring)—A handsome snow scenic. Scandinavian.

#### SHORT FILMS

##### INFORMATIONALS

- f CALIFORNIA MISSIONS—Lovely scenic. RKO-Radio.  
f COLORFUL BOMBAY The contrasting Oriental and Occidental elements in the great Indian city. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.  
fj FLEET HOOPS—Wild horses, work horses, thoroughbreds, polo ponies, trotters, pacers, race and steeplechase horses. Columbia.  
f FOREIGN SPORTS—National games and sports. RKO-Radio.  
fj GLIMPSES OF JAVA AND CEYLON—Interesting scenic in color. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.  
f GOING PLACES NOS. 33-35—Lowell Thomas takes us traveling. Universal.  
fj INDIA ON PARADE—Mostly about Baroda and the Taj Mahal. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.  
f KING SOCCER—Sports in the Argentine with Ted Husing describing the fine points. Paramount.  
f MANHATTAN WATERFRONT—Scenes along New York's waterfront. RKO-Radio.  
f \*MARCH OF TIME NO. 8 (3rd Series)—Covers, in its usual interesting fashion, the history, scope and arguments for and against the Child Labor amendment; African voodoo in Harlem; and the immense business interests affected by the Coronation crisis. RKO-Radio.  
fj \*MT. VERNON—Unusual, in that it is the first picture of the interior of Washington's home. Instructive and beautiful. RKO-Radio.  
f PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL No. 8—Bay of Fundy and Hawaii. Paramount.  
f SARATOGA—Sports and scenes of the popular resort. RKO-Radio.  
fj SKI SKILL—Some excellent pictures with Pete Smith commenting. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.  
f TREES—Beautiful shots—in color. Paramount.  
fj WHALE HO!—Interesting short of whale hunting. Vitaphone.



## CARTOONS

- fj MERRY MANNEQUINS (Color Rhapsody)—A department store comes to life after hours. Columbia.
  - fj MY ARTISTICAL TEMPERATURE—Popeye and his rival turn artists, and trouble starts when Olive Oil poses for them. Paramount.
  - f SWING WEDDING—Color cartoon in which frogs caricature swing music and some of its stars. Clever, and entertaining for swing addicts. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
  - f WOODLAND CAFE (Silly Symphony)—Some vigorous swing done by bugs. United Artists.
- COMEDIES, MUSICALS, NOVELTIES AND SERIALS
- fj BAC-RAC'S NIGHT OUT—A raccoon's unsuccessful night of foraging for food. Entertaining novelty. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
  - fj DAY WITH THE DIONNE QUINTUPLETS, A—Delightful picture of the famous babies from dawn to eve. They are becoming articulate in the film. RKO-Radio.
  - f GILDING THE LILY—Pete Smith gives some of the secrets of successful cosmetics and beautifying. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
  - fj GLOVE TAPS—Our Gang. Alfalfa has to fight a bully, for which Spanky trains him. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
  - f HI DE HO—Cab Calloway in a faintly dramatic sketch provides some excellent samples of his music. Vitaphone.
  - fj NOBODY HOME—Shorty the chimpanzee has a grand time when he is left at home. Paramount.
  - f PATHE TOPICS NO. 5—Zoo where animals are free and the people are caged; Raymond Knight, comic; etc. RKO-Radio.
  - f ROMANCE OF DIGESTION, THE—One of Robert Benchley's characteristic humorous lectures. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
  - f SCREEN SNAPSHOTS NOS. 6-7—Hollywood stars at play. Columbia.
  - j SECRET AGENT X9 (Serial) Nos. 5-7—About the theft of some crown jewels. Universal.
  - f SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS—Peter van Steeden and his orchestra plays three numbers. Vitaphone.
  - f STRANGER THAN FICTION NOS. 35-36—Strange people, facts and things all over the world. Universal.

## Parents, Teachers and Pupils Study the Motion Picture

OUR readers are familiar from frequent reference in the pages of this Magazine, with the course in Motion Pictures given at New York University, under the joint auspices of the National Board of Review, and the School of Education, in which the Board has extended its interest in the motion picture into practical application in a university course for teachers and others.

But no less than the growing university interest in the motion picture is the school interest, in which teachers and parents unite. An example of practical application here, is the cooperation which the National Board is extending to the Parent-Teachers Association of Tilden High School in Brooklyn, N. Y., in offering to parents, teachers and students a course of ten sessions to acquaint them with the many phases of motion pictures. The course which began February 25th consists of a two-hour session each week given on Thursday evenings at the

school. The fee is \$1.00 for the entire course. The session topics are: What is the Motion Picture? The History of the Motion Picture, Film Making, The Motion Picture Theatre and Its Audience, Organization of a School System for Photoplay Appreciation, Types of Films, What is Motion Picture Appreciation, Helps On Motion Picture Appreciation, The Social Implications of the Motion Picture, Preview of Feature Picture and Discussion, What Shall We Do About It?

## The 1937 Film Year Book

THE editor of the Film Year Book, Jack Alicoate, says in his introduction to the 19th annual edition, "Another year of substantial progress for the industry of the screen and another edition of the Year Book of Motion Pictures, filmdom's Standard Book of Reference." The former, the 1936 year of progress now past, is fully recorded in the latter, the 1937 Film Year Book now available. It contains 1260 pages of reference information on all kinds of subjects, including not only a record of progress, but information on producers and products, on pictures and on personalities, so that whatever the query here is the answer.

The Year Book is published by The Film Daily at 1501 Broadway, New York City.

## Block Booking

BLOCK BOOKING is a hardy perennial. Every year it comes up for attention and action, and, continuing the garden analogy, we ought, therefore, to get at its roots and learn whether it is something good which we care to nourish or something evil which we wish to wipe out.

Two pamphlets which will be helpful in getting this factual information have been published by the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc., one entitled "Who Selects America's Movies?" and the other "The Truth About Block Booking." These may be secured from that organization at 28 West 44th Street, N. Y. C.

## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures is a citizen body, organized in 1909 by the People's Institute of New York City as a medium for reflecting intelligent public opinion regarding a growing art and entertainment. This is still the Board's function, together with that of disseminating information on the subject of motion pictures and carrying on a constructive program having to do with community cooperation in the advancement and uses of the motion picture.

The National Board is opposed to legal censorship and is in favor of the community better films plan of placing emphasis upon and building support for the finer and more worthwhile films. It is at all times glad to cooperate with any agency to encourage and guide the motion picture in developing its possibilities both as recreation and as entertainment.

It carries on its work through various committees. All members of the committees serve without pay. No member is connected with the motion picture industry. They are representative of varied interests and activities and many are connected with large public welfare organizations or educational institutions.

The General Committee is a body evolved out of the original group organized in 1909. It is the appeal and central advisory committee of the National Board to which policies are referred and to which decisions of the Review Committee regarding pictures may be carried either by the producers or by the Review Committee itself.

The Executive Committee is composed of members of the General Committee and is the directing body of the National Board, charged with the formulation of policies, the election of members, the expenditure of funds and supervision of all administrative affairs.

The Review Committee is a large group of 300 members carrying on the work of reviewing the films. It is divided into sub-groups which meet for review per schedule during each week in the projection rooms of the various motion picture companies.

The Membership Committee supervises the membership list of the Review Committee and recommends the names of proposed new members for consideration by the Executive Committee.

The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays is composed of critics and students of the cinema interested particularly in encouraging the artistic development of the motion picture. It reviews and publishes a critique of the finest films and assists community groups in the showing of unusual films to special audiences. Its pioneer activity has done much to lay the foundation for the Little Photoplay Theatre movement and to stimulate the organization of subscription groups to develop audiences for the support of the creative achievements of the screen.

## NATIONAL MOTION PICTURE COUNCIL

The community or field work of the National Board of Review is conducted under its National Motion Picture Council, through affiliated membership groups, service contact groups and correspondents throughout the country. The National Council assists in the organization and program of work of local groups which are usually called Councils.

These Councils follow a plan initiated by the National Board in 1916 of having a membership composed of representatives from many organizations, cultural, educational, recreational, religious, and civic, so that they typify the original movement for community participation in the development and best use of the motion picture as recreation and education.

The objectives of such organizations are as follows:

To demonstrate through the education of public opinion, the effectiveness of selection and classification, instead of censorship, as a means of forwarding the development of the motion picture and its best uses.

To encourage through open meetings, forums, classes and other means, the study of the motion picture as a medium of entertainment, education and artistic expression.

To concentrate the attention of the public on specific worthwhile films through the publication of a Photoplay Guide to the selected pictures being currently shown at local theatres.

To arrange family Friday night or week-end programs of selected films, and junior matinees of pictures particularly suited to the tastes of children, through cooperation with local exhibitors.

To endorse and further the use of visual education through motion pictures in the schools.

To arrange and promote occasional exhibitions of exceptional and cultural films that would not normally be shown in the commercial theatres.

### PUBLICATIONS

The National Board of Review and its Council as an aid to the groups carrying out these objectives furnishes an informational service through its publications.

#### National Board of Review Magazine (monthly)

\$2.00 a year for individual subscriptions  
\$1.00 a year to Council or club groups

#### Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures

\$2.50 a year when taken alone, available at a special rate of \$1.00 in conjunction with the Magazine.

Selected Pictures Catalog (annual) .....25c

Special Film Lists .....10c ea.

Such as Selected Films for Children's Showings,  
Selected Book-Films, Educational Films, etc.

National Board of Review—Its Background,  
Growth and Present Status.....free

National Board of Review—How It Works.....free

A Plan and a Program for Community  
Motion Picture Councils .....10c

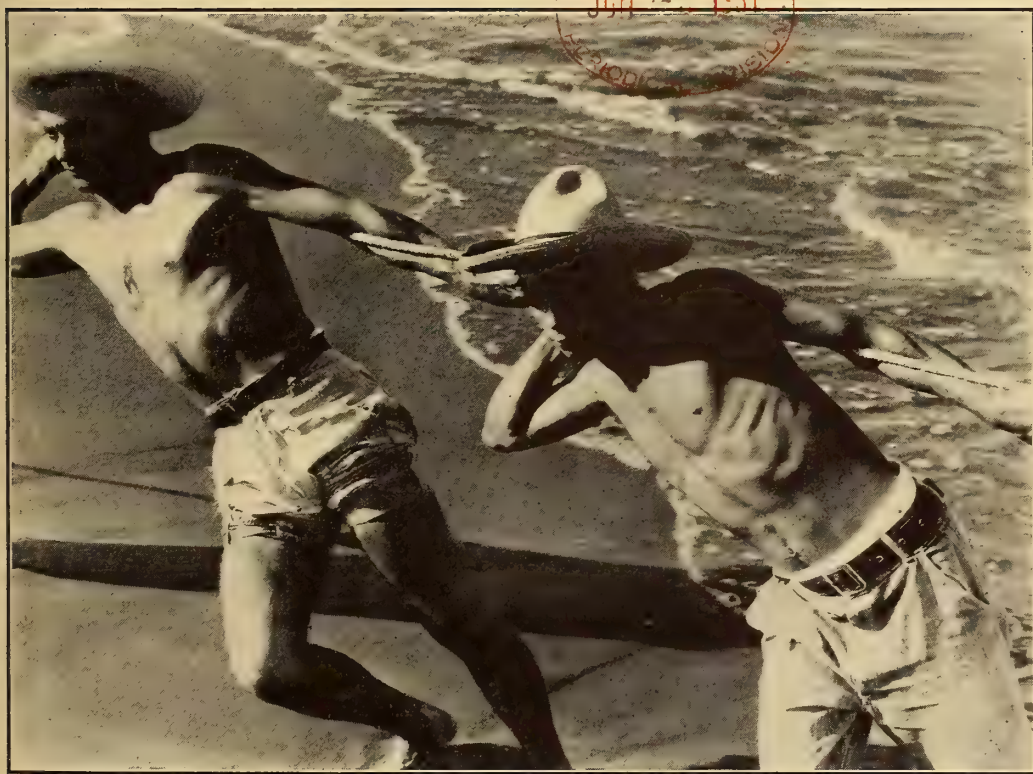


# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

Vol. XII, No. 5



May, 1937



*Mexican fishermen in "The Wave" (see page 12)*

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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

f AS GOOD AS MARRIED—Doris Nolan, John Boles. Screenplay by Norman Krasna. Directed by Edward Buzzell. A light and amusing story of a marriage of convenience. In order to cut down his income tax and guard himself against designing women, a wealthy man marries his secretary. Universal.

f CALL IT A DAY—Ian Hunter, Frieda Inescourt, Alice Brady. Play by Dodie Smith. Directed by Archie L. Mayo. A delightful comedy about a day in the life of an English family, in which romance rears its head with very entertaining results. The cast—uniformly excellent—includes Peggy Wood, Olivia De Havilland, Roland Young and Bonita Granville. Warner.

fj \*CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS—Freddie Bartholomew, Spencer Tracy, Lionel Barrymore. Novel by Rudyard Kipling. Directed by Victor Fleming. Kipling's fine story of the rich man's spoiled son washed overboard from an Atlantic liner and picked up, and made a man of by Gloucester fishermen. Some favorite episodes of the original have been omitted and a character built up for Spencer Tracy, but it is a fine picture. Suggested for school, library and church use. Recommended to the Exceptional Photoplays Committee. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f FIFTY ROADS TO TOWN—Don Ameche, Ann Sothorn. Novel by Louis Frederick Nebel. Directed by Norman Taurog. A harum-scarum comedy of two people, mysteriously fleeing from something, caught up

together in a wilderness shack. A pleasant mixture of romance and nonsense, with a lot of good laughs. 20th Century-Fox.

f GOOD OLD SOAK, THE—Wallace Beery. Play "The Old Soak" by Don Marquis. Directed by J. Walter Ruben. Another of Wallace Beery's lazy good-for-nothing characters, and how his son's troubles brought him to at least a temporary reformation. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f HIT PARADE, THE—Frances Langford, Phil Regan, Pert Kelton. Screenplay by Bradford Ropes. Directed by Gus Meins. A lively and tuneful piece about radio, and a talent scout who has to make a find when his star goes high-hat on him. Republic.

m INTERNES CAN'T TAKE MONEY—Barbara Stanwyck, Joel McCrea. Story by Max Brand. Directed by Alfred Santell. Dramatic romance. An interne in helping a friendless and persecuted girl wins the gratitude of a gangster and with his assistance succeeds in finding the girl's missing child. The story holds the interest and one forgets the incongruities of the situations. Paramount.

m \*LOVE FROM A STRANGER—Ann Harding, Basil Rathbone. Story by Agatha Christie. Directed by Rowland V. Lee. A gripping story of a modern Bluebeard. Married to a charming stranger she met casually, a young woman soon learns the sort of man he is. The story works up to a hair-raising climax. The acting of Ann Harding is excellent, but that of Basil Rathbone outstanding. A British production. United Artists.

f MAKE WAY FOR TOMORROW—Victor Moore, Beulah Bondi. Novel "The Years Are So Long" by Josephine Lawrence. Directed by Leo McCarey. A problem story of two old people who are separated for financial reasons and must live with their married children. Though a little maudlin in spots, on the whole it is an interesting story well directed and excellently acted. Recommended to the Exceptional Photoplays Committee. Paramount.

m \*MARKED WOMAN—See Exceptional Photoplays Department, page 10.

m \*MOUNTAIN JUSTICE—Josephine Hutchinson, George Brent. Screenplay by Norman Reilly Raine and Luci Ward. Directed by Michael Curtiz. The story deals with ignorant mountain people. A girl tries to bring modern medical science to her people but is hampered by those she is trying to help, and when she kills her father in self-defense, the mountain folk want her life.

(Continued on page 14)



# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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20c a copy, \$2.00 a year

## Censorship as an Author Views It

By WILL IRWIN

*An address delivered at the National Board of Review Annual Conference-Luncheon  
February 6, 1937.*

I am here today on behalf of the Author's League to air some of our old grievances as regards censorship. I speak in an opportune time because it just happens that last night there was produced here in New York the play which furnishes the best text for any talk about censorship—Shakespeare's *Richard II*. In about 1597 that promising young playwright, or his agent, approached Stationer's Register, at that time the official literary censor, with the manuscript of that play and asked permission to print it. The censor apparently passed it, but he cut out one passage, the touching scene wherein Richard is deposed and gives up the throne, because at that time Queen Elizabeth was unpopular, events were working toward the Essex Rebellion, and anything about the deposition of a king was not considered good politics. So that scene was first published in another edition five years after Queen Elizabeth's death.

Studying that censorship in its relation solely to the Elizabethan theatre, you strike something very amusing and illuminating. It existed to prevent anything seditious, blasphemous or obscene from appearing on the London stage. As regards the third of that trilogy of offences, you all know the intense impropriety of the Elizabethan theatre. There are in manuscript to-day plays of the period that could not have been produced even in the licentious days of

Charles II and could not possibly be printed today. But when some of the wild young university playwrights produced a little thing called the *Isle of Dogs*, which was probably a review pleasantly satirizing things in general, it was suppressed and Ben Jonson and five others connected with it went to jail for indefinite terms. And so it has gone right through the history of England.

The players of London are still the King's players and are still under the rule of a King's censor. During the past decade, three or more American plays have been forbidden production in London. A. E. Thomas' pleasant and touching comedy, *Just Suppose*, was suppressed because the leading character might be interpreted as being the existing Prince of Wales; Marc Connolly's *The Green Pastures*, because of a hard and fast rule forbidding any representation of the Deity on the stage; and their own domestic *Queen Victoria*, which has been played to such great success here by Helen Hayes this year, because living people have seen Queen Victoria and to show her on the stage must brush off some of the glamour that surrounds royalty. Also *In My Time*, a skit about President Coolidge, which he himself would have very much enjoyed, came off from the London stage because it might offend a friendly country. And only last week a comedian

on the London stage was fined twenty pounds for playing Adolf Hitler with a Jewish accent.

Yet all this time, we seldom, if ever, hear of any action against a London play on the ground of impropriety, whereas their stage is in that respect as bad or as good as ours. And ours is not lily-white in that respect!

We authors, in company with managers and actors, have often marveled at this singular phenomenon. When Americans talk of setting a government censorship over us, we wonder also why we alone among the learned professions are picked for that honor. You do not put a policeman in every lawyer's office to be sure that all his transactions are legal. You wait until he has done something illegal and then you arrest him. You do not watch doctors to see that they do not perform illegal operations. You do not take the sermons of a clergyman and go over them in advance to see if his statements are seditious. It is thrilling to feel like such dangerous people but it is annoying. However, looking back over history, I seem to find an explanation.

Censorship was founded in the beginning by politicians for purely political purposes. They were in power. They wanted to keep their power. They were afraid of new thoughts, and founded censorship to suppress them. Then they added impropriety to the censorship merely by way of sugaring the pill.

And official censorship is dangerous for another reason. The people who will run it will, of course, be politicians. They will not only be looking out for politics primarily—and every censorship flies to politics as straight as a dove to his cote—but they will be unable to work except by a set of rules. And you cannot apply hard and fast rules to a work of art. Censorship is in itself a kind of art. To know whether a given work is or is not the sort of thing that will be injurious to public morals takes taste, finer perceptions, even creative thought.

We have in the archives of this same Author's League a beautiful example of wooden censorship-by-rules. For some years

there prevailed in Boston a statute popularly called the Boston Book Bill. I will not go into the substance of this law except to say briefly that any citizen who found in a book for sale in Boston a word or passage which he considered immoral, might enter complaint at a police station. The desk sergeant thereupon must forthwith arrest the book seller and have him held for trial. Realizing they might all be arrested again and again, the booksellers made an agreement with the police. If there was any complaint against a book they would suppress its sale until the desk sergeant had time to look it over and determine whether it was immoral. If he ruled against them, they would suppress the book. In short, sergeants of police became the literary censors of Boston. As a result, there arose "bookleggers" who peddled the suppressed works secretly along with illicit alcohol.

The man who made most of the complaints was a retired clergyman who was very, very strong on personal purity. He believed that he was doing the Lord's work. He spent his time going from book-store to book-store reading all the new literature. When he found something which he thought immoral, he bought the book, marked the passage and took it straight to the police station.

Now there appeared a novel whose title I will not mention. This was a very artistic, very subtle, piece of work. I do not myself consider it immoral at all. But to those who are perfectly Puritanical about things, it might seem very immoral. The clergyman took this book to the desk sergeant. He read it and could not make it out at all. Not only did he fail to find immoral implications but he found no implications of any kind. It was all Greek to him. And the poor old clergyman wore out the rest of his life trying in vain to find a desk sergeant that could understand it.

The truth of the matter is, as I have said, that government censorship always in the end becomes political. Give us such censorship over our literature and our motion pictures and our dramas in this country and in ten years the politicians who run it will be ignoring morals in their zeal to suppress



anything so much as insinuating that the party in power is not the most enlightened of all parties, or that its principles are not the ultimate of human wisdom. Opposition would be musted, gently at first—and afterwards not so gently. That may sound fantastic, but if it does, consider Russia, Germany and Italy.

Probably some kind of censorship is logical. We cannot run human affairs, however, by logic. But if we must have censorship, the idea which you represent is the only safe way—censorship by people that have some sense of art, some sense of proportion, and—particularly—people who are not working for political ends.

## A Social Value in the Films

By LANGDON W. POST

*New York City, Tenement House Commissioner  
Member, Executive Committee, National Board of Review*

*Mr. Post in this talk given at the twenty-second Annual Conference-Luncheon of the National Board of Review presents further evidence of the social value of the entertainment motion picture.*

I have a hobby called housing. I have spent a great deal of time and I have done a great deal of talking, probably too much, and I have done a lot of writing and I have done a good deal of inveighing and I have called people a lot of names and been called names in return on the subject of housing. But it is something which has come close to my heart and something which is very important in the social and economic life of this country. I hope its future is going to be as happy as the future of the movies.

The greatest trouble that we have had in the question of housing the lower third of our population, if you like to put it that way, the lower income people, is to educate the other two-thirds to the necessity for it. Education is the only obstacle that stands in the path of giving some forty million people in this country a decent place to live in, and believe me there has been about one-third of the population of this country for the past one hundred fifty years living in nothing but—I hope you will pardon the word, I have never been able to find a synonym for it—lousy dwellings. And we have never been able to put this over to the public. In the past three years there have been reams

and reams of paper wasted, there has been a lot of talk about it, we have done our best to show the conditions. There have even been tragic fires, which sometimes have brought on more drastic laws. People have died in order that we might make a little step forward.

I only paint this picture to try to show you the value of what the theatre and the motion picture can do. The educational value of a movie or of a book or of the theatre, came home to me about a year and a half ago more completely than ever before. I am inclined to believe that a certain play that opened about that time, and is still running in the City of New York, has done more to educate and bring to the consciousness of people who can afford to go to the theatre—and they are not the people that I am talking about trying to house—the horrible influences that surround children living in the slums, than anything else I know of. I speak of *Dead End*. There have been but a comparatively few people who have seen *Dead End*. I realize that. That is the limitation of the theatre. I don't know how many it is, but I am certain it probably isn't over one hundred and fifty thousand people. And that is nowhere near enough.

Now that play is going to be dramatized by the movies.\* I am not sure that it isn't

\* *"Dead End" is being produced in film form by Samuel Goldwyn and will be distributed by United Artists in the late summer.*

actually in production now. It probably will be opened in New York and in other parts of the country reasonably soon. If that picture is done half as well as the play has been done, it will do more good for my hobby, more good for those people who are living in the conditions which you have heard described from time to time and which are so dramatically pictured in this play, than all the talking, all the shouting that many of us have been doing in the past three years. How many times, I wonder, would I have to talk on the radio before I could reach a million people? Probably a million years. And yet with the release of this picture, within six months after its release, millions upon millions will have seen it.

That play wasn't written for propaganda purposes. And incidentally it might interest you to know that this play came within one ace of being stopped here in New York. I had the privilege of contributing something to seeing that it was put on. But twenty-four hours before it was to open it was going to be stopped because the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children decided it was not a play to be produced. Mr. Bel Geddes called me about two weeks before the play was to open and said he thought this might happen and would I come and see it and tell him what I thought he should do so as to make sure it did go on. I saw it just as it was run through. The scenery was hardly set up. And even then I could tell it was going to be a moving thing and that it was not only important from the point of view of drama and literature, but it was more important from the point of view of propaganda. And I said to the author, "You have written the finest piece of propaganda as far as my business is concerned that I have ever seen." And you know he didn't write it for propaganda. And it wasn't until after the show had been going on in rehearsal for some time that Mr. Bel Geddes, the producer, realized that it had this very important element in it.

I wonder if *Dead End* is going to be ruined by the movies or I wonder if the movies are going to make it as great a picture as it is a play. I wonder if it is really going to carry the message and the truth

and the integrity which the author intended that it should into the millions of villages and towns of this country. I think it is the kind of a picture, mind you, that can have such value or can be of no value whatsoever.

The value of the picture is in its drama. If the author had gone out to write a piece of propaganda about housing, he never could have done it. He wrote a play and suddenly out of it came a tremendous social problem. I would love to have some part in helping the producers of that picture in trying to see that there is the same integrity, because I feel so strongly that it has great importance.

I am sure there are plenty of other pictures in this country that can do the same thing. *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* brought out something. I don't believe the author or even the director realized exactly what they were doing until they suddenly found they had something there that had real social implications, not only the fact that there are a lot of people starving and a lot of people who have more money than needed, but also in the most wonderfully subtle scene that I think I have seen in the movies for years, that question as to who is insane, who is looney now. Was it Mr. Deeds or was it those other guys?

I would like to make a plea to anybody who may have some influence, as to the importance of *Dead End* as a presentation of the greatest social problem facing us today—and I say that not because it is my hobby but because honestly with an open mind I see no other problem to equal the housing problem—to use this influence to see to it that this picture is not only a good piece of entertainment but that it carries the message that the play carried. And besides I am inclined to think from a good business point of view that that is the way it ought to be done, because if it loses that message I think it is going to lose its value. But I don't know enough about drama to say definitely whether that would be true.

What will censorship do to it? I don't know. We have a censorship board up in Albany. I did my best years ago to see if we couldn't get the law off the books. But try to get a department out of a government! You can't get rid of a department once you



have put it in. There are too many people interested and too many jobs connected with it. The only thing you could possibly try to do is to attempt to pull its teeth. I used to have a good deal of fun producing bills pulling the teeth of the New York censorship board. I didn't get awfully far, but still I did annoy certain people who are very fond of that board.

I suppose it would be shown in New York and in other states having censorship. I understand they are pretty strict about how they show their pictures and like them sugar-coated. It may be that the motion picture producer who is making this film will feel that too many states will throw it out if it is presented as it has been presented on the stage. If that is true, then I say it is a crime and I don't believe that there is much future for the movies. If they don't and it is allowed throughout the country, then I say the movies have advanced not just from five to forty, but have actually advanced and there is a future for them.

I realize perfectly well that the producers are not entirely to blame for the fact that the past in the movies has been one of a lot of sugar-coated pills. I realize that there have been many things that have prevented them from doing what they wanted. I believe the producers of this film will want to keep its integrity. But I believe it is people like yourselves, representing the people all through this country who are going to see that film, who can have more influence in seeing to it that pictures like *Dead End* hold their integrity and carry their purpose and still remain good drama. It is on your shoulders and you have got to influence these people. You have got to carry this thing, it seems to me, into the various communities and let them see good drama as against bad drama, good literature as against poor literature.

So, ladies and gentlemen, although I seem to have made a special plea for a special picture, it is only because that particular picture I feel I can talk about with some degree of expertness. I don't believe there is any medium in this world created by man that can be as forceful and carry as strong a message as can the movies.

## Book Reviews

### Sabu, the Elephant Boy

By FRANCES FLAHERTY

THIS is a charming story, and a true one, of the Indian boy who became a movie star in *Elephant Boy*, written by the wife of the man who made the picture. It tells of the search for someone to play the part of Toomai in the screening of Kipling's story, how he was found and how the picture was made. It also tells a good deal about the remarkable elephant, Irawatha, who also turned out to be a movie star. Almost every other page is an excellent picture taken from the film. The story is probably chiefly juvenile in its interest, but the pictures will delight everybody.—J.S.H.

*Published by the Oxford University Press, 114 Fifth Avenue, New York City. Price, \$1.00*

### Give Yourself Background

By F. FRASER BOND

AMONG the books that appear in such a continuous stream designed to help people who are consciously seeking the acquirement of "culture", this one stands out as eminently sensible and useful. The author's standards and knowledge—of which his book gives all the evidence that is necessary—are excellent. He realizes, among all the other things, how great the effect of the movies is in their insidious way of shaping people under the guise of recreation, and his chapter on "How Films Develop Background" is intelligent and discerning.

*Published by Whittlesey House, McGraw-Hill Book Co., N. Y. C. Price, \$2.00.*

HAVELOCK ELLIS in his volume entitled "Questions of Our Day" says regarding the immoral influences of the cinema: "seeing films is now . . . beginning to be as common as eating potatoes and sensible people no longer feel undue alarm about either habit." However, as far as young children are concerned, he points to the principle of moderation in either case.

# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS

## DEPARTMENT

*This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of Exceptional and Honorable*

*Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.*

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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## A Star Is Born

*Story by William Wellman and Robert Carson; adapted by Dorothy Parker; Alan Campbell and Robert Carson; directed by William Wellman; photographed by W. H. Greene; designed in Technicolor by Lansing C. Holden; musical score Max Steiner. Produced by David O. Selznick; distributed by United Artists.*

### The Cast

*Esther Blodgett*.....*Janet Gaynor*  
*Norman Maine*.....*Fredric March*  
*Oliver Niles*.....*Adolphe Menjou*  
*Granny*.....*May Robson*  
*Dannie McGuire*.....*Andy Devine*  
*Libby*.....*Lionel Stander*  
*Anita Regis*.....*Elizabeth Jenns*  
*Pop Randall*.....*Edgar Kennedy*  
*Casey Burke*.....*Owen Moore*  
*Theodore Smythe*.....*J. C. Nugent*  
*Aunt Mattie*.....*Clara Blandick*  
*Esther's brother*.....*A. W. Sweatt*  
*Miss Philips*.....*Peggy Wood*  
*Harris*.....*Adrian Rosely*  
*Ward*.....*Arthur Hoyt*  
*Posture coach*.....*Guinn Williams*  
*Otto Friedl*.....*Vince Barnett*  
*Academy Awards speaker*.....*Paul Stanton*  
*Billy Moon*.....*Franklyn Pangborn*

THAT fabulous place, Hollywood—which someone, even years ago, called as much a state of mind as a place—is far too vast and complicated a thing for one movie to present completely; but *A Star Is Born* covers a surprising lot of it. Directly or by implication it manages to enclose within its frame a good deal of Hollywood the town, Hollywood the institution, and the business

of making pictures in Hollywood. Along with this, by an indirection that is sometimes subtle and sometimes more than a little barbed, it provides a comment on the perpetual and insidious interaction between Hollywood and the public, each with its tremendous effect, so hard to analyze and so impossible to deny, upon the other.

In pattern a Cinderella story, this film happens to tell the one Cinderella story that today's life has many a time proved a true one. A girl going to Hollywood, completely unknown and without experience, and leaping with almost no trouble at all into stardom! Oddly enough the train of circumstances that accomplishes this near-miracle is entirely credible, because the characters involved in it seem lifelike, with understandable dispositions and motives. Whether they are typical, in such a combination, doesn't particularly matter so long as they are convincing. The whole Hollywood tale is convincing, as a matter of fact. It is only its framework—its prologue and epilogue—that is hard to swallow without gagging: some grandmother business, excessively sentimental and fabricated, in which May Robson repeats yet once again her conception of a barking old vixen with a lot of spurious philosophy and a heart of caramel-fudge under her boorish domineering.

The main part of the picture is as good as a visit to the cinema capitol under the auspices of someone who knows all and tells a good deal—with due regard to the discretion. You enter at once upon the holy of holies, Sid Grauman's Chinese Theatre, with its footprints of stars immortally embedded





*Courtship at a prize fight—one of the natural and unconventional episodes in  
"A Star is Born"*

in cement—and the essence of Hollywood is with you. In an entirely natural way you progress from outer to inner, from lower to higher. The cheap little hotel, later on the Trocadero, finally the magnificent estate of the established luminary; Hollywood Bowl, the Central Casting Office (with a kindly Peggy Wood to explain just why you should be discouraged and go back home), the studio with its workings: at length in the swim, in the money, in the fan's heaven. Your dreams of those glamorous careers keep happy pace with Esther Blodgett as she mounts the golden ladder and becomes Vicki Lester—through the make-up man's magic hands, through the camera tests, through the press-agent build-up (but not through the weary, nerve-racking, heart-breaking hard work of getting the picture made) to the triumphant preview. And fame and an Academy Award. Which

is all held together with remarkable humaneness by Janet Gaynor, who (under direction of a high order) easily makes the whole thing seem as if it really happened.

But against this rising of one star is set the falling of another. The man who gives her her first chance is already, though he doesn't realize it, slipping from his pinnacle, and his is no fairy tale but a grim picture of disintegration. A charming and generous, even an intelligent man he is, but a screen idol whose day is done, contemptuous of the public adoration that raised him so high, but with that adoration gone unable to find a foothold to stop his downward plunge, finding in drink the only thing that keeps reality from being unendurable. And finally even drink cannot keep life endurable. It is a tragic part (though oddly enough the trade is beginning to talk of it as a "light" part for Fredric March, which probably means that it is recognized as a human part, with

lights and shades and no whiskers or strutting buncombe), splendidly written and magnificently acted. Fredric March has never had a better chance to show what a fine and honest actor he can be.

This collapsed idol is not the villain of the piece, however. The real villain, as a little thought discloses, is the gargantuan monster which has grown up with the movie industry, that octopus of public curiosity that seems to be an inevitable part of public adulation, reaching into the most sacred intimacies of its gods and goddesses and leaving them no possible hope for a normal private life. Just a nice friendly interest, maybe? Just take a look at the funeral near the end of *A Star is Born* and figure out what a prominent movie personality can do, continually hounded by such interest. Lionel Stander is given the unhappy job of personifying this universal characteristic as the press-agent in this film, who must keep the public clamorous and satisfied at the same time, and as he does the thing with characteristic gusto and terrific honesty he is going to be vigorously hated by many an audience. The part is likely to work as libel on publicity men, who don't really deserve being mixed up in another Frankenstein-and-his-monster confusion.

Altogether, if you want to look at it that way, this film is a pretty keen comment on things as they are, leaving out a lot of aspects of Hollywood life but treating those which it does use with remarkable honesty. William Wellman deserves some hearty appreciation for the idea, for the way he has used the help of his collaborators, and for the final manipulation of actors and technicians in bringing it all into its final shape on the screen. (Incidentally, he has made the best use of Technicolor to date, for dramatic purposes. Technicolor is the ideal medium for telling the truth about some of the things in this film—which may be a compliment with a double edge.) And finally, if you don't care to bother about looking under the surface, you can go to this picture with the assurance that you will see the best movie about Hollywood that has yet been made, and be excellently entertained.

J.S.H.

## Marked Woman

*Written by Robert Rossen and Abem Finkel; directed by Lloyd Bacon; photographed by George Barnes; produced and distributed by Warner-First National.*

### The Cast

Mary .....	Bette Davis
David Graham .....	Humphrey Bogart
Gabby .....	Lola Lane
Emmy Lou .....	Isabel Jewel
Johnny Vanning .....	Eduardo Cianelli
Betty .....	Jane Bryan
Florrie .....	Rosalind Marquis
Estelle .....	Mayo Methot
Louie .....	Allan Jenkins
Gordon .....	John Litel
Charlie .....	Ben Weldon
Ralph Krawford .....	Damian O'Flynn
Sheldon .....	Henry O'Neill
Jail lawyer .....	Raymond Hatton

YOU would hardly expect a picture with this title to break one of the oldest rules of the movie game, but it does—it not only leaves out the final clinch of united lovers but lets the leading man and leading lady separate, perhaps never to see each other again, without a single word of love ever having been spoken between them. And by so doing sets the ultimate seal of sincerity to a drama that has skated pretty close to melodrama at times, and at times has seemed perilously near to indulging in a little surreptitious flirtation with hokum.

Once more the Warner Brothers have gone to the headlines for their subject matter, and found there a vigorous story too close to the things going on around us to be looked at as just another movie. The temptation to romanticize such a tale must have been tremendous, for audiences have been trained for thirty years or more to dislike such things unless they were coated with enough sugar to make them look like a box of candy. Even as it is there are plenty of reticences—"vice", which even the most sedate newspaper can now blaze in large letters across its pages, is never mentioned, and sex, at the very heart of the problem involved, might be some obscure function of



the parotid for all the conventional manifestations of it that are visible to the innocent eye. But these reticences are wise for more reasons than those of censorship. They keep the values social instead of luridly sensational, and put the emphasis where it belongs—in the body politic.

Here, really, is a dramatization of a Lucky Luciano, and though Bette Davis is

thing more than a mere individual murderer or gangster being brought to justice—that here is something that may be skulking, not unsuspected but intrenched, just around the corner. If that sounds rather solemn and abstract, put that way, you will not find it so when you get your first look at Eduardo Cianelli taking over his new “night club,” which is to be a handsome clip joint, and



*From the trial scene in "Marked Woman"—the girls appearing as witnesses*

the star most active in the proceedings, the final impression involves a whole class of unfortunate women instead of one lone heroine battling for her valentine-boy. It is a story of one of the most sordid of rackets, in which love is valued solely as a commodity of commerce, and of a district attorney's fight, in this instance successful, to get the chief racketeer behind bars. Its surface interest is that of a detective story, but it carries the immense added force of having behind it, giving it weight and driving power, the inescapable implication that here is some-

giving his first instructions to his “hostesses.”

At once, as these girls pass under the baleful, appraising inspection of their new boss and then move away together to the place where they live together (a bit, it must be admitted, in a sort of five-little-girls-from-school atmosphere) it is apparent that a somewhat different tale is to be told, a tale of many and not of one, and though in the course of it the dramatic emphasis naturally concentrates upon a nominal heroine, in the end—with the same girls disappearing to-

gether into the fog of the city night—the same note is struck with an impressiveness that leaves the dominant key of the theme unforgettably in the memory.

It is equally apparent that these girls are working girls, and that the jobs they work at are determined by economics and nothing else. Just what they do is never explicitly stated: to an unsophisticated understanding it merely has to do with night life, parties, drinking and gambling—and getting men to spend money. But there is never any implication that it is a life of pleasure, gilded and alluring, or that anything but the need to earn a living in the only way they can keeps them at it. Even the dullest, or most innocent, perception cannot fail to realize that there is something terrible about it. Eduardo Cianelli's remarkable impersonation of the sinister Johnny Vanning attends to that—his iron ruthlessness, wearing an implacable mask behind which all possible evil may be at work, dominates everything, and leaves no possible doubt about the real nature of his trade though precise details of it may never be stated.

The trouble the law has in getting at such men is a complicated thing, the sum and substance of which lies in the difficulty of finding a specific provable charge to go to a jury with. For dramatic purposes, in a story like this, it has to be a definite act, and that is provided by the one fortuitous element in the picture, and the one element that for the moment seems sentimental and the stuff of old-fashioned fiction. A younger sister of Mary, the most forceful character among the group of girls, comes to town in time to be caught in a raid, and when she finds out the taint on the money that is educating her, her virtuous innocence revolts. This, through a series of complications, results in her being killed—and that is the thing on which the district attorney can definitely proceed. It is also the thing that goads Mary to revolt, and makes her an ally of the law.

From then on the drama is definitely a battle of individuals, though the social forces behind them are never entirely obscured. It is stirring and effective, and everybody contributes to the effectiveness of it:

Cianelli, Humphrey Bogart (as good a district attorney as he ever was a villain), all the girls, and particularly Bette Davis, who is one of the few among women stars who seem able to ally a very definite personality to the depiction of differentiated characters—in other words to act.

To call a film by such a bleak term as "social document" may seem to be damning it as entertainment. But that is what this film must be called, for its sincerity and its relation to actual things. But it is a rousing good show as well. —J.S.H.

## The Wave

(*Redes*)

*Written and photographed by Paul Strand; directed by Fred Zinneman; music by Sylvestre Revueltas; English titles by John Dos Passos and Leo Hurwitz; produced by Paul Strand.*

### *The Cast*

*Native fishermen of Alvarado on the Gulf of Mexico*

THIS is a picture that gets strength and a large measure of its moving fidelity from going straight to the actual scene of its story and using the native people of that place instead of professional actors. It is like some of the fine Russian films in this, just as it is like the Russian films in the quality of its photography and, most of all, in its point of view and the direction of its sympathies. Ten years ago, before we knew Dovzhenko and Eisenstein, it would have been much more striking: today, though we see it as a follower rather than a pioneer in a certain tradition, it still is beautiful and arresting, with the power of stirring thought through the emotions.

In the strictest and most literal meaning of the word this can be called an amateur film, in the sense that it has every evidence of having been made, not for commercial or professional reasons, but out of love—love for its subject and a passion of sympathy for the life it pictures, and love for its medium.

The plot is extremely simple, which is its strength and its weakness. It tells of fishermen in Mexico who are exploited by their employers. It centers upon one man, whose



child dies from lack of money to provide medical care. He leads a strike for fairer pay, there is a battle among the workers—the strikers and those who for one reason or another are against the strike—in which the man is killed. His death unites all the workers, who at the end appear to be on the way to a victory for their cause.

This kind of plot, of course, is as much a formula as the boy-meets-girl formula dear to the heart of Hollywood. Moreover it is a bare kind of plot, because there is none of that infinity of detail with which Hollywood has the trick of covering up its formula and giving its trite skeleton the semblance of something just different enough to seem new. The people in *Redes*, in their final effect, are symbols more than individuals, which has the virtue of keeping the issue clear from the personalities—the fundamentals are not confused with any preoccupation with He and She and their personal charms and idiosyncracies.

The picture is unprofessional in another, and technical way. It does not move along with the deftly varied cinematic ease that the practiced makers of films have learned, and this is perhaps most apparent in its use of speech. The dialogue is the one thing that invariably suffers from being delivered by unskilled actors, and the effect of this is that a good silent film seems to have been hurt by the introduction of spoken words. Speech (and this is more noticeable when the speech is in a foreign tongue demanding printed English words for its understanding) slows up not only the action of the actors but the flow of the picture.

But these defects—which it would be unfair to a sincere artist not to point out—cannot obscure the essential beauty and strength of the film, nor the sense of real life, and the important things in life, which is one of the film's most essential and impressive qualities. More of the persuasiveness, tricky though it may be, that lures audiences to far more trivial movies, would have brought *Redes* more of the widespread appreciation its sincerity deserves, instead of leaving it to the tiny minority that is looking, consciously and self-consciously, for "art."—J.S.H.

## This Season Offers Good Shorts as Program Seasoning

WONDER what our judgments would be if we had been thinking of choosing the best shorts of the year so far? In connection with this thought it may be interesting to see what exhibitors, those who serve us theatre programs, have chosen in the preference pool conducted by the New York State Exhibitor, industry paper published by Jay Emanuel Publications, results of which have been announced.

The selections are made as to type and length, either one or two reels.

Here is their decision on the films winning the awards: two Reel Color Cartoon, *Popeye the Sailor Meets Sinbad the Sailor*, a Max Fleischer Special Cartoon, Paramount; two Reel Comedy, *Neighborhood House*, Produced by Hal Roach, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer; two Reel Color Dramatic, *Give Me Liberty*, Patrick Henry making his famous speech, Vitaphone; two Reel Dramatic, *The Public Pays*, "Crime Doesn't Pay" series, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer; two Reel Color Musical, *Changing of the Guard*, Vitaphone; two Reel Musical, *Violets in the Spring*, "Musical Comedy" series, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer; two Reel Novelty, *You Can't Get Away With It*, presented with the permission of U. S. Attorney, General Homer S. Cummings and J. Edgar Hoover, Universal.

And in the one reel class the following: one Reel Color Cartoon, *The Old Mill*, Harman-Ising series, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer; one Reel Cartoon, *Bridge Ahoy*, Popeye-Max Fleischer cartoon, Paramount; one Reel Color Musical, *Lover's Paradise*, "Musical Romance" series, Paramount; one Reel Musical, *Every Sunday*, "Tabloid Musicals" series, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer; one Reel Color Novelty, *Colorful Occupations*, "E. M. Newman Colortour Adventures" series, Vitaphone; one Reel Novelty, *The Killer-Dog*, "Pete Smith Specialties" series, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer; one Reel Sport, *An Underwater Romance*, "Grantland Rice Spotlight" series, Paramount;

one Reel Color Travel, *Land of the Midnight Sun*, "E. M. Newman-Colortour Adventures" series, Vitaphone; one Reel Travel, *Memories of Spain*, "Magic Carpet of Movietone" series, 20th Century-Fox.

Special Awards were made to *The March of Time* for definite progress as a two reel subject in the opinion of exhibitors as well as the public, and to Walt Disney for the high standing of the Mickey Mouse and Silly Symphony subjects in the series vote of exhibitors.

There were several close runner-ups in each class indicating no shortage of good shorts.

## Selected Pictures Guide

(Continued from page 2)

- A stark story, well acted by the entire cast and well directed. First National.
- 
- f NIGHT KEY—Boris Karloff. Screenplay by William A. Pierce. Directed by Lloyd Corrigan. A story of revenge. Defrauded in the fair share of his burglar alarm invention, a poor half-blind old man invents a machine which ruins the alarm system, and is forced to use the neutralizer for a gang of crooks. The acting of Karloff is excellent. The love interest is supplied by his daughter and a G-man. Universal.
- 
- m \*NIGHT MUST FALL—Robert Montgomery, Rosalind Russell. Play by Emlyn Williams. Directed by Richard Thorpe. Extremely tense story of a murderer. Almost clinical in its study of a certain criminal type. Remarkably well done by everybody in the cast, and by the director as well as the writers. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- 
- f \*NOBODY'S BABY — Patsy Kelly, Lyda Roberti, Robert Armstrong, Lynne Overman. Screenplay by Harold Law, Hal Yates and Pat C. Flick. Directed by Gus Meins. A first rate farce, without much plot (it's about two girls training to be nurses) but enough to keep a stream of laughter going continuously. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- 
- j OLD LOUISIANA—Tom Keene. Screenplay by John T. Neville. Directed by I. V. Willat. An adventure story of a plot to make Louisiana an independent republic just before Jefferson purchased it from France. Crescent.
- 
- fj \*PRINCE AND THE PAUPER, THE—Billy and Bobby Mauch, Errol Flynn. Novel by Mark Twain. Directed by William Keighley. The adventures of a prince and a beggar boy who looked so much alike that when they exchanged clothes the pauper found himself a prince and the prince was thrown out of the palace. The story though fantastic is interesting and the acting of the Mauch twins outstanding. Suggested for library use. First National.
- 
- f \*SHALL WE DANCE—Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Edward Everett Horton. Screenplay by Allan Scott and music by George and Ira Gershwin. Directed by Mark Sandrich. A bright and shiny variation of the Astaire-Rogers comedies, with novel situations and numbers, a good deal of humor, and of course splendid dancing. RKO-Radio.
- 
- j SMOKE TREE RANGE — Buck Jones, Muriel Evans. Screenplay by Francis Graham. Directed by Leslie Senender. A Western a bit above the average. A girl and her brother are being dispossessed by a wealthy old landowner, but his grandson comes to the rescue. The scenery and riding are fine. Universal.
- 
- f SONG OF THE CITY—Jeffrey Dean, Margaret Lindsay. Screenplay by Michael Fessier. Directed by Errol Taggart. A young ne'er-do-well, pursued by a rich divorcee, is made a man of by the family of an Italian fisherman, whose daughter gives up an operatic career for him. A good deal of singing and jumping into the water. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- 
- m \*STAR IS BORN, A—See Exceptional Photographs Department, page 8.
- 
- m THUNDER IN THE CITY—Edward G. Robinson, Luli Deste. Screenplay by Robert Sherwood and Aben Kandel. Directed by Marion Gering. A big-shot American salesman goes to England to learn dignified English methods and finds ballyhoo goes even bigger there than here. A pleasant boost for cordial relations between the two countries, some of it amusing. The heroine is not happily cast. A British production. Columbia.
- 
- f WAKE UP AND LIVE—Walter Winchell, Ben Bernie, Jack Haley, Alice Faye. Screen-



play by Curtis Kenyon based on Dorothy Brande's book. Directed by Sidney Lanfield. Funny, fast-moving and tuneful show about a mysterious radio singer (unknown even to himself!) who causes the Bernie-Winchell feud to reach new heights. Music by Gordon and Revel. 20th Century-Fox.

m WOMAN I LOVE—Paul Muni, Miriam Hopkins, Louis Hayward. Novel "L'Equipage" by Joseph Kessel. Directed by Anatol Litvak. The story of a woman who deceives two men—her husband and her lover, who are flying partners in the French Army during the Great War. Fighting and tragedy. RKO-Radio.

f YOU CAN'T BUY LUCK—Onslow Stevens, Helen Mack. Screenplay by Martin Mooney. Directed by Lew Landers. A pleasing story of horse racing. A wealthy horse owner has his own idea of buying luck, and the method finally gets him involved in a murder. RKO-Radio.

## SHORT SUBJECTS

### INFORMATIONALS

- f CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION—The Isle of Rhodes; Istanbul; Greece. Vitaphone.
- fj \*GAME TRAILS—Hollywood cameramen go hunting with their cameras in Canada. Beautiful shots of wild life. Paramount.
- fj LAND OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN—Fascinating scenes of Norway and Lapland in color. Vitaphone.
- f MARCH OF TIME NO. 9 (3rd series)—Covering—the British effort to make healthier man power for their army; the spread of amateur detectives and an association of them in Elizabeth, N. J.; and an impartial review of the Supreme Court situation. RKO-Radio.
- f NATURE—THE ARTIST—Flowers from all over the world, particularly the American desert, in color. Vita.
- f PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 9—Paramount.
- f PATHE TOPICS NO. 6—RKO-Radio.
- f \*PENNY WISDOM—A Pete Smith special in color, featuring Prudence Penny. An amusing and instructive lesson in cooking. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f POPULAR SCIENCE NO. 5—Paramount.
- f ROMANCE OF ROBERT BURNS—The poet's love story delightfully told in color. Vitaphone.
- f STRANGER THAN FICTION NOS. 37-40—Universal.
- f VITAPHONE PICTORIAL NOS. 6-9—Vitaphone.

### CARTOONS

- fj BUG CARNIVAL (Terrytoon)—An amusing cartoon. Educational.
- j FELLA WITH THE FIDDLE, THE (Merrie Melody)—A miserly mouse tries to hide his wealth from the tax collector. Vitaphone.
- fj HOSPITALIKY (Popeye)—Popeye and his rival try to get on the sick list so that Olive Oil can nurse them. Paramount.
- j I ONLY HAVE EYES FOR YOU (Merrie Melody)—A tongue-tied iceman hires a ventriloquist to woo his girl. Vitaphone.
- fj LET'S GO—An amusing cartoon in color. Columbia.
- j PICADOR PORKY (Looney Tune)—Porky plans to fight a fake bull but the real bull enters the ring instead. Vitaphone.

j PIGS IS PIGS (Merrie Melody)—A gluttonous little pig has a horrible nightmare. Vitaphone.

fj PORKY'S DUCK HUNT (Looney Tune)—Porky shoots everything except ducks. Vitaphone.

fj PUDGY PICKS A FIGHT (Betty Boop)—Pudgy has a fight with Betty's new furpiece. Paramount.

j PUDGY TAKES A BOW WOW (Betty Boop)—The little pup has a fight with a black cat and interrupts Betty's act. Paramount.

fj SHE WAS AN ACROBAT'S DAUGHTER (Merrie Melody)—An amusing take-off on a motion picture theatre—its program and its audience. Vitaphone.

### COMEDIES, MUSICALS, NOVELTIES, SERIALS AND SKITS

fj BRING ON THE GIRLS—Interesting old-time vaudeville with Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy looking on. Vitaphone.

f OLYDE McCLOY—Some good jazz music. Vitaphone.

fj HEARTS ARE THUMPS—The three Gang musketeers—Spanky, Alfalfa and Buckwheat—in a revolt against the sweetness of St. Valentine's day. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f HOME RUN ON THE KEYS—Babe Ruth, Zee Zee Confrey and Byron Gay prepare a radio tune and skit. Vita.

f PLAY STREET—Young entertainers get a chance at jobs. Vitaphone.

f SCREEN SNAPSHOTS NO. 8—More about the movie stars. Columbia.

j SECRET AGENT X9—NOS. 9-11 (Serial)—Still trying to recover the crown jewels. Universal.

fj THREE SMART BOYS—One of the more amusing of the Our Gang comedies, about a plot of Spanky's to get school closed on account of an epidemic. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

A print of the film version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has been presented by Warner Bros. to the Folger Shakespearean Library in Washington.

MOTION picture films and news photographs ranked high among the commodities scoring an increase of 71.7 percent in the number of air express shipments in and out of New York City for the second month of 1937, as compared with the same time in 1936, according to a Railway Express Agency announcement. This is believed by agency officials to be a fair reflection of air express increases for the nation as a whole. Of the 20,462 shipments handled at New York in that time motion picture films and news photographs accounted for 3,167 or 15.5 percent of the total for the city. Incoming shipments totaled 1,489 compared with 797 a year ago. Outgoing shipments numbered 1,678 compared with 1,259.

COLLEEN MOORE's famous doll house which has been on tour for charity has taken in \$285,000 to date.

## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures is a citizen body, organized in 1909 by the People's Institute of New York City as a medium for reflecting intelligent public opinion regarding a growing art and entertainment. This is still the Board's function, together with that of disseminating information on the subject of motion pictures and carrying on a constructive program having to do with community cooperation in the advancement and uses of the motion picture.

The National Board is opposed to legal censorship and is in favor of the community better films plan of placing emphasis upon and building support for the finer and more worthwhile films. It is at all times glad to cooperate with any agency to encourage and guide the motion picture in developing its possibilities both as recreation and as entertainment.

It carries on its work through various committees. All members of the committees serve without pay. No member is connected with the motion picture industry. They are representative of varied interests and activities and many are connected with large public welfare organizations or educational institutions.

The General Committee is a body evolved out of the original group organized in 1909. It is the appeal and central advisory committee of the National Board to which policies are referred and to which decisions of the Review Committee regarding pictures may be carried either by the producers or by the Review Committee itself.

The Executive Committee is composed of members of the General Committee and is the directing body of the National Board, charged with the formulation of policies, the election of members, the expenditure of funds and supervision of all administrative affairs.

The Review Committee is a large group of 300 members carrying on the work of reviewing the films. It is divided into sub-groups which meet for review per schedule during each week in the projection rooms of the various motion picture companies.

The Membership Committee supervises the membership list of the Review Committee and recommends the names of proposed new members for consideration by the Executive Committee.

The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays is composed of critics and students of the cinema interested particularly in encouraging the artistic development of the motion picture. It reviews and publishes a critique of the finest films and assists community groups in the showing of unusual films to special audiences. Its pioneer activity has done much to lay the foundation for the Little Photoplay Theatre movement and to stimulate the organization of subscription groups to develop audiences for the support of the creative achievements of the screen.

## NATIONAL MOTION PICTURE COUNCIL

The community or field work of the National Board of Review is conducted under its National Motion Picture Council, through affiliated membership groups, service contact groups and correspondents throughout the country. The National Council assists in the organization and program of work of local groups which are usually called Councils.

These Councils follow a plan initiated by the National Board in 1916 of having a membership composed of representatives from many organizations, cultural, educational, recreational, religious, and civic, so that they typify the original movement for community participation in the development and best use of the motion picture as recreation and education.

The objectives of such organizations are as follows:

To demonstrate through the education of public opinion, the effectiveness of selection and classification, instead of censorship, as a means of forwarding the development of the motion picture and its best uses.

To encourage through open meetings, forums, classes and other means, the study of the motion picture as a medium of entertainment, education and artistic expression.

To concentrate the attention of the public on specific worthwhile films through the publication of a Photoplay Guide to the selected pictures being currently shown at local theatres.

To arrange family Friday night or week-end programs of selected films, and junior matinees of pictures particularly suited to the tastes of children, through co-operation with local exhibitors.

To endorse and further the use of visual education through motion pictures in the schools.

To arrange and promote occasional exhibitions of exceptional and cultural films that would not normally be shown in the commercial theatres.

### PUBLICATIONS

The National Board of Review and its Council as an aid to the groups carrying out these objectives furnishes an informational service through its publications.

#### National Board of Review Magazine (monthly)

\$2.00 a year for individual subscriptions  
\$1.00 a year to Council or club groups

#### Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures

\$2.50 a year when taken alone, available at a special rate of \$1.00 in conjunction with the Magazine.

#### Selected Pictures Catalog (annual) \_\_\_\_\_ 25c

#### Special Film Lists \_\_\_\_\_ 10c ea.

Such as Selected Films for Children's Showings, Selected Book-Films, Educational Films, etc.

#### National Board of Review—Its Background, Growth and Present Status \_\_\_\_\_ free

#### National Board of Review—How It Works \_\_\_\_\_ free

#### A Plan and a Program for Community Motion Picture Councils \_\_\_\_\_ 10c



# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

Vol. XII, No. 6



June, 1937



*Beulah Bondi and Victor Moore in the famous party scene in "Make Way for Tomorrow"*  
(see page 9)

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National Board of Review of Motion Pictures*

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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

- f BEHIND THE HEADLINES—Lee Tracy, Diana Gibson. Screenplay by Thomas Ahearn. Directed by Richard Rosson. A lively and interesting story of the rivalry between a radio broadcasting reporter and a girl newspaper reporter. RKO-Radio.
- f CAFE METROPOLE—Tyrone Power, Loretta Young, Adolphe Menjou. Screenplay by Gregory Ratoff. Directed by Edward Grifith. An American heiress pursues her young man through a daffy comedy laid in Paris, with the crafty owner of a big cafe and a Russian refugee nobleman causing complications. 20th Century-Fox.
- f CHARLIE CHAN AT THE OLYMPICS—Warner Oland, Katherine DeMille. Screenplay by Paul Burger. Directed by H. Bruce Humberstone. One of the best of the Charlie Chan series, with the additional timely interest of having the Zeppelin Hindenburg in it. Many authentic shots of the Olympic games in Berlin. 20th Century-Fox.
- fj CHEROKEE STRIP, THE—Dick Foran, Jane Bryan. Screenplay by Ed Earl Repp. Directed by Noel Smith. Lively tale of the land rush into Oklahoma some forty years ago, and a young lawyer (a singing lawyer) who helps establish order in the frontier city that springs up. Stirring action of its kind, and some good songs. First National.
- m DAMAGED GOODS—Pedro de Cordoba, Douglas Walton, Esther Dale. Play by Eugene Brieux. Directed by Phil Stone. A dignified and sincere adaptation of Brieux's

crusading play against syphilis. More a sermon than a drama, though earnest acting gives a good deal of emotional punch to it. Its chief value (and that is a great one) is in its sensible and informative discussion of the subject without any lurid sensationalism. An important social film. Suggested for schools; worth being kept permanently available. Grand National.

- f DEVIL IS DRIVING, THE—Richard Dix, Joan Perry, Elisha Cook, Jr. Screenplay by Lew Loeb and Harold Buchman. Directed by Harry Lachman. A dramatization of the problem of drunken driving and auto accidents, tremendously effective because the story has interest and power enough to leave its lesson to teach itself—which it does inescapably. Columbia.
- f DRAEGERMAN COURAGE—Barton McLane, Henry O'Neill, Robert Barratt. Screenplay by Anthony Coldeway. Directed by Louis King. The story of a rescue from a mine, founded on fact. The sharing of a common danger settles some personal difficulties among the characters, and the vigorous action and fine courage pictured has a thrill in it. The men are the most real as well as the most important characters. First National.
- m DREAMING LIPS—Elizabeth Bergner, Raymond Massey, Romney Brent. Play "Melo" by Henry Bernstein. Directed by Paul Czinner. A drama, from the French, of a childlike woman who could not choose between two men (one of them her husband) and had to make a tragic decision to keep them both from long suffering. Well produced and acted, with several remarkably good episodes. United Artists.
- f FOREVER YOURS—Beniamino Gigli. Screenplay by Hugh Gray and Arthur Winters. Directed by Stanley Irving. Story of a girl who disappointed in love marries an opera star because she admires his voice and feels sorry for his motherless child. The singing of Gigli is excellent and the story appealing. Grand National.
- f HOLLYWOOD COWBOY—George O'Brien, Cecilia Parker. Screenplay by Dan Jarrett and Ewing Scott. Directed by Ewing Scott. A brisk and often humorous Western with modern trimmings, which gives it plenty of novelty. It's about a movie star and a movie writer on a vacation, who get mixed up in an up-to-date cattle racket. RKO-Radio.
- f HOTEL HAYWIRE—Leo Carrillo, Mary Carlisle, Lynne Overman, Spring Byington. Screenplay by Preston Sturges. Directed by George Archainbaud. A light and amusing (Continued on page 6)



# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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## Two New Council Members

THE National Motion Picture Council of the National Board of Review heartily welcomes the addition of two new members to its Advisory group, Mrs. Jesse M. Bader and Mrs. Lloyd A. Rider. Both Mrs. Bader and Mrs. Rider are very active in varied fields of motion picture interest. A recital of the diversified activities and connections of these members is proof that those who devote their time and energy in worthwhile ways to community and organization motion picture interests are those who have many other interests as well. They are representative of the kind of busy people who make up this Council membership.

Mrs. Bader is a traveler and a lecturer. In 1927 she went around the world, taking as her especial interest the study of gardens in the countries which she visited, having had since childhood a love of nature. She has lived in many countries, but is making her home at present in New York City.

Her services to various organizations are as follows: chairman of the Women's Committee of the National Conference of Jews and Christians; vice-president of the National Council of Federated Church Women; acting chairman of the Motion Picture Department of the Federal Council of Churches; member, National Peace Conference; vice-chairman of The Save the Children Fund; member, Executive Committee of Women's National Radio Committee; member, Sorosis Club. Her local New York activities include membership in the Lower

West Side Council of Social Agencies and the Metropolitan Motion Picture Council.

In spite of these many memberships, Mrs. Bader's interest is a conscientiously active one, as the Board well knows, having called upon her for help in program activities, large and small, when she has willingly and effectively given her time to the last detail.

At present she is actively at work on the Institute of Human Relations, to be held at Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts this coming August 29th to September 3rd. "The Institute of Human Relations has been organized," she tells us, "to give an opportunity for leaders among Catholics, Jews and Protestants to consider thoroughly and systematically some of their common interests and concerns as citizens in American communities and to plan community and educational programs that will result in better community relations."

Mrs. Bader was reared on a ranch in Oklahoma. She attended Drake University at Des Moines, Iowa, where she met Dr. Bader and they were married and continued their education there. Dr. Bader is Executive Secretary of the Department of Evangelism of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America. Mrs. Bader was later ordained to the ministry in the Disciples Church.

Mrs. Rider has for many years been connected with the Parents Association of P. S. 119 in Brooklyn, N. Y., serving as its president from June 1933 to June 1935 and also for many years has been a member of the

Mother's Club of Kings Highway M. E. Church, serving as its vice-president in charge of programs.

She was present at the formation of the Motion Picture Council for Brooklyn, in March 1934, and was elected vice-chairman. In September 1934, on the resignation of the chairman, she assumed that position. It was under her leadership that the division of Brooklyn into districts was decided upon and organization was begun in five districts. She held this chairmanship until March, 1937.

In November, 1936, she was given the chairmanship of the newly-formed Motion Picture Committee of the United Parents Associations of New York. This Committee was formed for the purpose of investigating the operation of the matron's law. This local law which was put into effect in July of that year, supplanted in New York City the unworkable law prohibiting the admission of unaccompanied children under 16 to motion picture theatres. While it was hoped that this change would work out for the best interests of public, both parent and child, and exhibitor, it was necessary for a vitally interested parent group to make certain of this by a study of its application and this study was put in the capably directing hand of Mrs. Rider. In telling of it she says, "The survey was made in the five Boroughs and we were interested in such points as the personality of the matron, location of the children's section, danger of injury to the children in case of fire or panic, comfort of the theatre, sanitary arrangements, ages of children admitted, etc. Because the law had been in operation so short a time the report of operation was general, but on the whole favorable to matrons and theatre management." Mrs. Rider has recently become secretary as well of the United Parents Associations. Another of her educational activities is membership in the Committee on Government and Education of the League of Women Voters.

Likewise interested in the motion pictures, in junior activities are Mrs. Rider's three young daughters. Her husband is a teacher in the Abraham Lincoln High School of Brooklyn.

Mrs. Rider is from the south, Georgia being her childhood home. She holds degrees from Bessie Tift College, Forsyth, Georgia, and from Columbia University.

## Summer Movie Courses

SUMMER visitors to Hollywood may spend their time profitably in a study of the motion picture by means of two courses to be given in Los Angeles. The University of Southern California will hold a Motion Picture Summer Session, June to August. The subjects covered will be Fundamental of Production, Story and Continuity, Social and Psychological Aspects of Motion Pictures, Motion Picture Appreciation, Audio-Visual Education. Instructors will be Dr. M. Metfessel, Dr. B. V. Morkovin, and Mrs. S. M. Mullen; with guest artists and experts from Hollywood. And the American Institute of Cinematography has arranged a National Cinema Appreciation Convention with symposium, excursions, performance, and preview. The Pre-convention Session will be held July 6-7, and the Convention Session, July 29-31. Details are available from the Cinema Appreciation League, 3551 University Avenue, Box 74, Los Angeles, California.

Teachers College, Columbia University, in New York City, offers two courses in Auditory and Visual Instructional Aids for the summer session. One on Materials and Methods in Visual and Auditory Education, given by Professor Fannie M. Dunn, Dr. V. C. Arnspiger, and Dr. Cline M. Koon, is designed to afford definite aid to teachers and administrators who wish to use visual and auditory aids effectively, special emphasis is given to motion pictures, both silent and sound, and to radio. Another on Research in Auditory and Visual Education by the same instructors, is designed to serve the needs of directors of departments of visual and auditory education, instructors in teachers colleges, and others in positions of leadership.



# An Important Book about the Movies

*Reviewed by James Shelley Hamilton*

MORTIMER J. ADLER, who is Associate Professor of the Philosophy of Law at the University of Chicago, has written a book which ought to be required reading for everyone seriously interested in the movies, and particularly in the movies as a social factor in modern life. The title of it is *Art and Prudence*, a title that needs some definition to indicate how it is related to the movies.

Prudence—(partly to quote and partly to paraphrase Professor Adler)—is that quality which guides a man to wisdom and sound judgment in his course of action in practical matters: a habit of the intellect and the will—on the side of the intellect the habit of using knowledge for practical purposes, on the side of the will the habit of commanding action in the light of knowledge. There is private prudence, directed to the well-being of the individual, and political prudence, directed toward the common good, the well-being of men as members of the community. In relation to art (and the art with which Professor Adler is chiefly concerned is the art of the motion picture, because that is the universal popular art of the present day) prudence is political, and the problem it must face when the movies are attacked or defended as being detrimental or conducive to moral and social goods is to direct the will in its decision between action and inaction, or between different sorts of action. The series of questions for the prudent man are (1) shall the arts (and especially the movies) be left alone, or shall some action be taken? (2) If the latter, shall the action be extirpation or control? (3) If the latter, what specific type of regulation or supervision is most expedient?

As a basis for discussing these questions Professor Adler lays a solid philosophical foundation, going back to Plato and Aristotle for the first problems of art and prudence, and following those problems historically through the Christian points of view represented by Jeremy Collier and Bishop

Bossuet on the one hand and St. Thomas Aquinas on the other, to the principles more closely associated with modern democracy represented by Rousseau and John Dewey. The perspective of this philosophical foundation is applied consistently through the six hundred and more pages of the book, and gives it a depth and soundness which most disputants about the movie question have no conception of.

Assuming that neither inaction nor extirpation are practical answers to the movie question, Professor Adler proceeds to look at different methods of control. His outline may be stated in his own words: "The proposal of any type of supervision or control of the production, distribution and exhibition of motion pictures raises a series of questions: (1) What are the ends which the proposed control aims to serve? (2) What other alternative measures might be taken to achieve the same ends? (3) Of the various means to a given end, which is positively most efficient in accomplishing it and negatively least objectionable in its other consequences? (4) Is the given end, for which one or another means is proposed, desirable in itself or as a means to some further end, and does its positive value if achieved outweigh the negative values that may be incident in achieving it? Those who propose action of any sort must do so because they think some good will be accomplished by it or, what is the same thing, some evil will be remedied. It follows, therefore, that persons urging action must claim to know that an existing state of affairs is bad in some sense and that it can be improved."

After a detailed investigation of the claims made for and against the motion picture as a contemporary issue and an examination of the need for knowledge and the difference between knowledge and opinion, Professor Adler proceeds to probe into the attempts at scientific research concerning the effects of the movies, upon both the mature and the immature. Those who have read,

and taken seriously, the continuously increasing number of studies professing to be scientific, particularly those published under the sponsorship of the Payne Fund, should read this analysis of them.

The conclusion is that knowledge, in the proper sense of the word, is not to be had, and that the prudent man must be guided by opinions, opinions which are diverse and conflicting and often difficult to choose among.

The Payne Fund studies in particular, so widely publicized as scientific researches, are shown to be mostly quite unscientific, either through limited field of study or unscientific technique, and therefore not useful at all as ascertained knowledge.

As to action, where as in the case of the movies there is a balance between positive and negative values, and regulation appears to be the wise alternative to either inaction or extirpation, the type of regulation is the important thing, whether it is to be external to artistic activity itself, supervising only the circumstances under which works or art are received, or whether it attempts to dictate the content of art, "violating the workshop itself by entering it without the credentials of technique. Regulation of the latter sort is clearly unwise. It engages a prudent man in matters exceeding his competence. It is better to kill an art than to choke or mangle it. If it is allowed to live, it should be granted the freedom indispensable to its vitality and vigor. But to grant an art freedom in its proper domain . . . does not mean that it should be allowed to run wild in the community. It is proper for the prudent man to supervise the ways in which works of art reach their audience, to say, not what should be made, but what shall be received and by whom and under what conditions. . . . If opinion is conflicting and uncertain, and if scientific evidence is either not available or no more certain and unambiguous than opinion . . . the prudent man should seek to do what he can to increase the benefits of a particular art and to minimize the undesirable consequences: *to do what he can*, within the limitations imposed upon him by the inviolable autonomy of art, on the one hand, and by his honest

doubts and uncertainties concerning the relevant facts, on the other."

The final section of the book is a singularly concise and profound analysis of the aesthetic principles involved in movie criticism.

This brief notice is not an attempt to cover the scope of Professor Adler's book in detail, much less to bring to it the same kind of critical dissection which he brings to his subject. It is an attempt to indicate, to those whose interest in movies is genuinely artistic or social, for whom movies are either actually or potentially something more important than ephemeral recreation, that here is a book they should read. Its form and style are worthy of its purpose, and its achievement is something incomparably beyond anything similar which the present reviewer has any acquaintance with.

*Art and Prudence—A Study in Practical Philosophy, by Mortimer J. Adler. (The moral, the political, and the aesthetic aspects of the motion picture). Longmans, Green and Co. \$5.00.*

## Selected Pictures Guide

(Continued from page 2)

ing comedy of family troubles. The acting is good. Paramount.

m \*I MET HIM IN PARIS—Claudette Colbert, Robert Young, Melvyn Douglas. Screenplay by Claude Binyon. Directed by Wesley Ruggles. Comedy romance. A popular young lady is having her fling in Paris where she meets two men who fall in love with her. From Paris they go to the Swiss Alps and there you get scenic beauty and many thrills. Well acted and altogether a most satisfactory picture. Paramount.

m \*KID GALAHAD—Edward G. Robinson, Bette Davis, Humphrey Bogart. Novel by Francis Wallace. Directed by Michael Curtiz. Story of a young prizefighter who makes good, both in the ring and with his manager's sister. Though there is nothing new about the plot, the acting is excellent and is well directed. Warner.

fj KILLERS OF THE SEA—Capt. Wallace Caswell. Directed by Raymond Friedgen. A trip in a schooner to the Gulf of Mexico with Lowell Thomas as commentator. Captain Wallace Caswell, the G-man of the deep, killing the killers. Showing him fighting and overpowering whales, sharks and other giant sea monsters. The picture

(Continued on page 15)



# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS DEPARTMENT

*This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of Exceptional and Honorable*

*Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.*

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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## Night Must Fall

*Adapted by John Van Druten from Emlyn Williams' play, directed by Richard Thorpe, photographed by Ray June, musical score by Edward Ward. Produced for Metro Goldwyn Mayer by Hunt Stromberg, distributed by Metro Goldwyn Mayer.*

### The cast

Danny .....	Robert Montgomery
Olivia .....	Rosalind Russell
Mrs. Bramson .....	Dame May Whitty
Justin .....	Alan Marshall
Dora .....	Merle Tottenham
Cook .....	Kathleen Harrison
Belsize .....	Matthew Boulton
Nurse .....	Eily Malyon
Guide .....	E. E. Clive
Saleslady .....	Beryl Mercer
Mrs. Laurie .....	Winifred Harris

THIS is a distinctly out-of-the-rut picture. It violates two presumably strong box-office traditions: first, that Robert Montgomery is nothing but a gay playboy, scattering pert and sophisticated whimsicalities about in expensive surroundings; second, that horror is a combination of violent physical action and grotesque make-up in the Lon Chaney-Boris Karloff style. Devotees of these two traditions will be surprised. Maybe they will cling so fondly to their preconceived Montgomery that they will expect him to pull a trick at the end which will reveal that he has been fooling all along and is still only the cute lad who always swaps badinage with society lassies, with a bed invariably leering somewhere in the offing. Or—sensing that the thing isn't a comedy, for all its laughs, but really a murder story—wait for some climax of passion and violence that will provide good old-fashioned

Frankenstein shivers. And they may be disappointed. Such people are simply not of pioneer stock, their appreciation is closed against novelty. But they will be readier for something similar in the future.

*Night Must Fall*, in addition to being something of a trail-blazer, and susceptible to the indifference that trail-blazers so often encounter, is remarkable for being about as perfect a job of film-making as any reasonable person can expect. Though it came from a play and abounds rather plentifully in dialogue it has the fluent movement of a true motion picture without a detectable word that doesn't serve a definite and legitimate purpose, either to forward the plot, create mood or atmosphere, or reveal character. It is written with an expert sense of dramatic contrivance, so that while it is always building onward toward its end, it manages on its way to create a house and its household, with several characters and their backgrounds all rounded out and solid, and a course of action that moves from shade to light and back to shade again, with all sorts of variety in its unity, to the ultimate darkness that is foreshadowed from the beginning. Through an unusual combination of skills, in direction and acting, this remarkable piece of writing is brought to a kind of life that is haunting and memorable. It isn't everyday life, though its people are everyday enough in their talk and actions, but a kind of living with undertones and overtones of terror to it that give it the subtle mystery of a dream.

In outline it is simple enough, for all its unusualness. It is about a bell-boy in a



*Robert Montgomery  
and  
Dame May Whitty—  
the youthful murderer  
getting into the  
confidence of his victim  
in  
“Night Must Fall”*

hotel, full of ambitions and daydreams, who has created a world of his own in his own mind quite apart from the humdrum drudgery of his daily life. In his imagination he is something napoleonic, and all he needs is money to make his imaginings real. He is one of those unfortunate egos who become unbalanced by the way things are in the world, and believes, with a profound faith, that he can, and has a right to, shatter that world and remold it to his own desires. For such a man ordinary right and wrong does not exist, and such things as murder are mere exercises for his cleverness.

This is a rather heavy description of a young fellow who appears at first to be nothing worse than impudent—charming, likeable, quick and resourceful, making a place for himself in a quiet, pastoral household

where a cranky, stingy old woman in a wheel-chair tyrannizes over a dependent niece and two women servants. But gradually it begins to dawn on us, as it also dawns on the niece, that this broth of a blarney-boy, with his engaging brogue and disarming grin, is the murderer of a woman who disappeared from the hotel where he had been working. Not only that, but he is out to murder the old woman, for the money she keeps hidden miser-like in her bedroom. There is a Scotland Yard man always in the offing—is he fooled, and will he go on being fooled? And the niece—will she give in to the fascination this youngster has for her, with what she suspects about him, and the mixture of repulsion and sympathy he rouses in her? Will he go through with



what he has planned? And will he be caught?

It is a drama of steadily mounting tension and complication, shot through with intimations of repressed instincts and thwarted desires that keep a wild kind of terror barely held in leash hovering over the most ordinary comings and goings in that lonely house. It is much more than a melodrama, because everything that happens grows out of the inner natures of the people involved—the boy with his wiles and smiles and dimly glimpsed flashes of mania, the lonely old lady with her greed and selfishness and childless dependence, the girl with her surface hardness and inner sensitiveness, her unblossoming youth and her curiosity—half romantic, half cynical. The impact of this young man on these two women makes a strange and fascinating drama, exciting to watch even without an understanding of its psychological elements.

One has to go back to Fritz Lang's *M* for anything of its type to compare with this film, and even *M* seems rather heavy and obvious by comparison. In that German masterpiece was a criminal who murdered because he was insane, driven by a compulsion that only a doctor could discover, and perhaps no doctor could remedy. Here is a murderer who might, with different chances for his abilities to expand in, have become a general, or a financier, or a statesman—at least something in whom a disproportionate ego is respectable. He might even have become just a decent and well-balanced citizen. Anyway, he seems not so much a villain as a victim, and a victim of society, not of disease.

It should surprise no one who remembers other things Robert Montgomery has done (things like his part in *Night Flight*) that he is an actor capable of handling weightier things than the agreeable but fluffy roles he usually fills in comedies. Few people, however, could have foreseen what he would do with *Danny* in this film, a piece of acting that has to be seen more than once and thought over carefully to appreciate what understanding and skill has gone into it. It all looks so smooth and easy, so like, in so many ways, the Montgomery we are ac-

customed to; yet with depths and heights and all the gradations between that in the end have exposed, behind the surface of a pleasant personality, the mind and spirit of a peculiarly desperate man. It is acting of a high order, and it is supplemented by good acting, too, from all the rest of the cast, among whom the two important women stand out because of the importance and difficulty of their parts. Dame May Whitty, as the old woman, lifts what might have been a conventional character part into a vital element in the cumulative effect of the picture, and Rosalind Russell, by some miracle of just-rightness, manages to skirt the danger of being a mere feminine love-interest and creates, on the screen, a thoroughly integrated character which the play, as a play on the stage, quite failed to do. And the others in the cast, in their smaller ways, were all just as effective.

It is hard to tell, in a picture where everything fuses together so perfectly as here, just who deserves the credit. But certainly no small amount of this successful fusion must be due to Richard Thorpe, whose direction makes him someone to watch.

(Rated *Exceptional*)

J.S.H.

## Make Way for Tomorrow

*Adapted by Vina Delmar from Josephine Lawrence's novel "Years Are So Long," directed by Leo McCarey, photographed by William C. Mellor, original music by George Antheil. Produced by Leo McCarey for Paramount, distributed by Paramount.*

### The cast

Barkley Cooper .....	Victor Moore
Lucy Cooper .....	Beulah Bondi
Anita Cooper .....	Fay Bainter
George Cooper .....	Thomas Mitchell
Rhoda Cooper .....	Barbara Read
Harvey Chase .....	Porter Hall
Nellie Chase .....	Minna Gombell
Bill Payne .....	Ralph Remley
Cora Payne .....	Elizabeth Risdon
Robert Cooper .....	Ray Mayer
Max Rubens .....	Maurice Moscovitch
Mamie .....	Louise Beavers
Doctor .....	Louis Jean Heydt
Carlton Gorman .....	Gene Morgan

HERE is another trail-blazing film, of a more important kind, and one that strikes nearer home—literally strikes nearer (literally) home. For it is a story of home and mother, of families and old age and economic insecurity and the difference, so often tragic, between different generations. It is trail-blazing because it takes one of the most hokum-sodden themes the movies have ever exploited, and at the risk of being uncomfortable entertainment for almost everybody, treats that theme honestly and fairly and without sentimentality.

It is one of the few films that really does hold a mirror up to us, and, looking in it, there must be few people who for one reason or another will not squirm. Even those who have an honestly clear conscience about their families (who have tried to understand—and maybe succeeded—and been sympathetic and generous), or perhaps have no families to have a conscience about—even these cannot entirely escape some faint twinge of guilt that human kind hasn't managed to evolve a way of doing things which would give old age less reason to be helpless and pathetic.

For this is a story of an old couple, ordinary and commonplace, not very crafty or wise, who have brought up their children in the decent, ordinary way and launched them in the world, and then (not being crafty and wise in the ways of business) find their savings gone, and their home. Their children are all grown up and married, but for one reason or another it is an inconvenience, if not an actual burden, for any of them to open their home to their father and mother. Besides, there is no place where there is room for both. And none of them have much money—enough to care for the old couple in a home of their own. So in the end the father sets out for what he euphemistically calls a visit to his daughter in California, not knowing that the mother, because there is nothing else to do, is going into an Old Ladies' Home. They'll probably never see each other again.

It sounds like a tear-jerker, and indeed many a tear flows at seeing it. But it is a long, long way from things like *Over the Hill*, which shamelessly smeared its people either all white or all black, piled up the woe

of the poor old mother, made one lone son an Alger hero, and ended with a grand triumph of virtue over selfishness. Here there is no villain. Seeing it, you may think, with some irritation, "Oh, why don't they manage things more sensibly! Surely if they did this, or that, there wouldn't be all this trouble!" But they don't manage things more sensibly—they are just some of the millions of people who never do. The old man, who can't get a job at book-keeping, has a chance to take a house, with him and his wife as caretakers. But he doesn't want his wife, old as she is, to go to work that way, and he never tells her about it. He isn't being stubborn or selfish—he just can't, at his age, change, and let his wife become a drudge.

His wife goes to the New York home of her favorite son, who is married and has a growing-up daughter. Everybody tries to make the arrangement work, but it can't be done. The old lady doesn't fit in. They can't tell her to stay in her room when her daughter-in-law is giving the bridge lessons that help balance the family budget, and so she sits in her squeaking rocking-chair chattering away like any good neighbor and gets on everybody's nerves. They can't tell her to stay in her room when her granddaughter's young friends drop in—she thinks it is part of her duty as a member of the family to help entertain company. And so there they all are, all of them well-meaning, all of them human, knocking against one another in an impossible situation.

It is the old lady who finally takes the decisive step, and makes up her mind to go to the Home which she knows her son has been looking into for her without being able to bring himself to suggest it to her. But her husband mustn't know—he must go to California, where he can recover from the effects of his pneumonia, thinking she is still with her son. He must think she will join him later.

There is to be a family farewell party before he goes, but the old couple get to wandering about the city on their last day together, recalling the honeymoon they spent there, and partly by accident they find themselves in their honeymoon hotel. They end



by dining there—calling up the children, as the children did countless times in other days, to say they won't be home for dinner. This little party of theirs—their drink at the bar; the surprising invitation from the manager, because they were there fifty years before, to stay and dine; their dancing, with an amiable orchestra leader fitting his music to their old-fashioned steps; all the happy revival of old memories—is a climax to the picture full of touching sentiment that escapes being sentimental. Beulah Bondi and Victor Moore skirt beautifully around the mawkishness that used to be the style in such situations, and by being most heart-breaking when they are most happy throw a light back over the past, that illuminates the essential point with stabbing brilliance. Even the parting at the train isn't so poignant, though it drives the point finally home, as that exquisite episode, played with such gallantry and gaiety, which sums up the decent, useful lives they have lived so simply together, a family partnership that only death should end.

Fine understanding of people and of life went into the writing of this story, something of the large sympathy that Maeterlinck's old man yearned for when he cried out: "If I were God I would have pity on the hearts of men!" And a fine fairness and honesty, because it keeps away from that ultimate of sentimentality which paints up ordinary humanness into fictitious heroisms and villainies.

Other people, in addition to Victor Moore and Beulah Bondi, help make this picture the true thing that it is—Fay Bainter, in particular, as the daughter-in-law, harassed by her own problems as a mother, and Thomas Mitchell as the well-meaning son.

Only something rather slow-footed in the direction, a plainness in style that comes sometimes too close to dullness, keeps the film from being, artistically, as fine a movie as an American has ever made. As a comment on American life, and as a venture into new paths of truth that few producers would have the courage for, it ranks with the greatest.

(*Rated Exceptional*)

J.S.H.

## Captains Courageous

*Adapted by John Lee Mahin, Marc Connolly and Dale Van Every from Rudyard Kipling's story, directed by Victor Fleming, photographed by Hal Rosson, musical score by Franz Waxman. Marine director, James Havens. Produced for Metro Goldwyn Mayer by Louis D. Lighton. distributed by Metro Goldwyn Mayer.*

### The cast

Harvey .....	Freddie Bartholomew
Manuel .....	Spencer Tracy
Captain Disko Troop .....	Lionel Barrymore
Mr. Cheyne .....	Melvyn Douglas
Dan .....	Mickey Rooney
Uncle Salters .....	Charles Grapewin
Long Jack .....	John Carradine
Cushman .....	Oscar O'Shea
Priest .....	Jack La Rue
Dr. Finley .....	Walter Kingsford
Tyler .....	Donald Briggs
Doc .....	Sam McDaniels
Charles .....	Billy Burrud

IF Rudyard Kipling could rise from his dusty resting-place and see the movie they have made of his tale of the Newfoundland fishing banks—"for to admire an' for to see"—he would surely find much to send his admiration merging into amazement. "If this be I, as I suppose it be," he might murmur, like the old lady who found her petticoats cut off up to her knees, and think back to the salty yarn he wrote forty years ago for the delight of generations of boys, and wonder. But he would just as surely stay till the last fade-out, and admit at the end that they had made a good show of it, and done some things that with all his word magic he could never have dreamed of doing.

He couldn't mind that they have made Harvey Cheyne a bit younger than he imagined him, or that, for simplification and what not, they have made him motherless. He would enjoy Harvey's father being called a tycoon, and all the up-to-dateness of the tycoonery, and admit they had done a much better job than he in showing up the nastiness of a spoiled rich boy. All the detail—even to the infinitesimal glimpse of the map in the first edition of "Treasure Island"—would delight him, and Harvey's showing off at the ice-cream bar would seem a big improvement on his own smoking-room device for getting the boy sick and into the ocean. And the liner slipping away in the



Freddie Bartholomew and Spencer Tracy aboard the "We're Here" in "Captains Courageous"

fog, and Manuel in his dory emerging from the fog, and the sounds of the conch shell and the bell from the fishing schooner—what words of his could equal actually seeing and hearing these things?

By then he would be sitting comfortably back, in pleased expectation. A fine preparation for his story of how Gloucester fishermen—"for their work continueth, great beyond their knowing"—were to make a man of a snobbish little good-for-nothing. Now for the story!

Well, here's the "We're Here," and a fine ship, too! And the captain, Disko Troop (he wouldn't be so aware as some that it's just Lionel Barrymore being Lionel Barrymore all over again), and Uncle Salters, and Long Jack, and Dan. The cook seems rather unfamiliar—wasn't he a Cape Breton negro, with the odd name of MacDonald, who talked Gaelic, instead of this Pullman-porterish servantish stock figure? But apparently he isn't going to count very much,

for the story is changing. What has become of Dan? The first glimpses of him seemed pretty good—Mickey Rooney is making him one of the characters most like what was in the book, and he and Harvey were to work together and lay the foundation for a friendship that would go on through their manhood. But he has vanished, and the Portuguese fisherman, Manuel, is taking his place as Harvey's friend.

Mr. Kipling's ghost bids goodbye to his book and settles back to watch the movie Messrs. Mahin, Connolly, Van Every and Fleming, all under the supervision of Mr. Lighton, have contrived to replace it. Being—ghostlike—gifted with more than mortal understanding, he sees how the thing had to be lifted into more of a spectacle than what he had written, and move along to more of a climax than merely getting the boat full of fish. The slow building up of muscle and character in Harvey couldn't be drawn out through weeks and months—it had to come



in vivid, dramatic episodes. He sees, too, that American movies aren't expected to be profitable unless they have a love interest in them, and since Harvey is somewhat young for a conventional love affair and a girl on board the "*We're Here*" would be a bit too absurd in these days of movie realism, the only thing to do is to work up a heart-tugging friendship instead. It was tried tentatively in *Treasure Island*—how Jackie Cooper wept when he had to part from Wallace Beery! And since Spencer Tracy means a lot more at the box-office than Mickey Rooney, just build up the part of Manuel, and make him the friend!

The ghost, being as curious as he ever was in life about how things are done, and why, finds this all very interesting, and he looks about him and sees how the audience is being thrilled and moved, and he can't help being thrilled and moved himself. Freddie Bartholomew is a pretty good Harvey—amazingly good before his reformation!—and Spencer Tracy more than a pretty good Manuel. But it was a pity to have wasted Mickey Rooney—he started out so well.

There's one thing the ghost cannot understand, knowing—as he does—that first-rate studios have all the means in the world for getting things technically right. Why weren't the sailing vessels managed better? Why, in that race for home, weren't the right things done in one scene to cause what happened in the next scene? And why—even a landlubber could notice it—were scenes of wind and calm all jumbled up together? Such carelessness about detail as that the ghost cannot forgive.

And he wonders what they will do to *Kim*.  
(*Rated Honorable Mention*) J.S.H.

## The Last Night

Written by R. Gabrilovich and Yuri Reisman,  
directed by Yuri Reisman, musical score by A.  
Veprik. Produced by Mosfilm, Moscow, distrib-  
uted in U. S. by Amkino.

### The cast

Zakharkin ..... I. R. Peltser  
His Wife ..... M. G. Yarotskaya  
Peter Zakharkin ..... N. I. Dorokhin  
Kuzma Zakharkin ..... A. A. Konsovsky

Ilya Zakharkin ..... V. A. Popov  
Leontiev ..... N. N. Rybnikov  
Alexei Leontiev ..... S. M. Vecheslov  
Lena Leontiev ..... T. K. Okunevskaya  
Michailov ..... V. V. Gribkov  
Semikhatov ..... I. I. Arkadin  
Soskin ..... M. I. Kholodov

THE story of *The Last Night* will be a surprise to no one. Two families are living side by side in Moscow on the eve of the October Revolution, and are shown caught up in the confusion and fever of that period, its primitive struggle shucking off the surface attitudes of master and servant, noble and base—revealing the essential and (the producers hope) representative qualities underneath. In one capacity or another the families meet across the barricades (the one new note in this is the rich girl, who has a tender interlude with Poor John but turns out presently to be a trifler). A strategic corner must be held or stormed; the troops first obey, then are won over; there are snatches of the nervous energy at headquarters; men die or carry on and there is a lot of sniping and flying splinters and machine-gun fire. At the station finally the day is won, then lost for a moment as White reinforcements pull in, then won forever as the trainload goes over to the Revolution and the men march off, merely having started their united task. The picture of the Revolution is more of a reminder than of anything new in history; the moral is that of the enmity of class enemies—*i.e.*, about as perfunctory now as the moral of cops and robbers.

No one cares about a story's being old stuff, of course; the trouble is that every time this one is done over there is the same episodic lack of story continuity, the same jarring unclear connectives and handy symbols. (The same lack of adequate lighting and sound effects, too; but for once a good job of translation.) What isn't old is the treatment—not of the film as a whole but of the individual situation, where people come out before the camera in their warm redolent selves, giving their personalities to the story and filling it with life. This sort of thing can't be old, or ever less fresh than the top of the morning; and while a lot of it is the work of the fine Russian school of

acting, the Russian school of film directing has played its own part, developing a special tradition of getting actors in the right focus, conceiving and executing the situation both through and around them. Yarotskaya, to take one of a dozen possible examples, does a noble and delightful part as the mother, building up an intimacy in the audience that allows the suggestion of much more than can possibly meet the eye in any one photo-

type for just this place); the brothers were good; the low-comedy salesman wouldn't have disgraced René Clair. As for the upper-class characters—maybe it was so, but you wonder if somewhere in Russia there wasn't a White who failed to eat babies and lick spittle at the same time, at least on certain days of the week, just for a variation. Outside of some battle scenes, some long shots of squares and things, *The Last*



*The crucial arrival of the train in "The Last Night"*

graphed attitude. Aiding in that and following it up is the director, who places her centrally in the high two-minute tension of his train-arrival sequence; cuts her in presently waking up the sleepy boy, and then, by having the awkward bundle of her figure hurry off after her marching men into the fade-out, he somehow manages to use the character she has built as a comment and pointing-up of all the meaning and faith and passion of his story.

The old man was good (really a splendid

*Night* mainly comes to life only in the department of human relations. And the relations are so good it seems a pity to be always making them secondary to a prime and eternal dogma of how they *had* to be this way because otherwise they would have been off the Line and therefore could not possibly be at all, as can be demonstrated by economics, which will be good for you to know, over and over again, lest you, too, get off the Line.

(*Rated Honorable Mention*)

O.F.



## Selected Pictures Guide

(Continued from page 6)

would have lost nothing without Lowell Thomas who got tiresome. Grand National.

f LEAGUE OF FRIGHTENED MEN, THE—Walter Connolly, Lionel Stander, Eduardo Cianelli. Novel by Rex Stout. Directed by Alfred E. Green. One of the Nero Wolfe mysteries, with considerable novelty of plot and characterization, and a solution (for which the clues are not very obvious) that is a surprise. Columbia.

f MAN IN BLUE, THE—Robert Wilcox, Edward Ellis, Nan Grey. Screenplay by Kubec Glasmon. Directed by Milton Carruth. A story of a policeman who adopts the son of a man he killed in the line of duty. When the boy grows up he finds out his past makes him a target of suspicion and leaves his foster father to join up with his rascally uncle. After serving a prison term he is reunited with his adopted father. Universal.

f MEET THE MISSUS—Victor Moore, Helen Broderick. Story "Lady Average" by Jack Goodman. Directed by Joseph Santley. An amusing satire on the present day contests. What the husbands suffer when the wives enter the Happy Noodle Contest. RKO-Radio.

f SPEED TO SPARE—Charles Quigley, Dorothy Wilson, Eddie Nugent. Screenplay by Lambert Hillyer and Robert Granet. Directed by Lambert Hillyer. A champion speed racer and how he cured his brother of being wild, reckless and selfish. Excellent racing scenes. Columbia.

f TALK OF THE DEVIL—Ricardo Cortez, Sally Eilers. Screenplay by Carol Reed and Anthony Kimmins. Directed by Carol Reed. A trusted manager of a ship-building concern is betrayed and kills himself, but is cleared of the charge after death. The hero is the innocent tool but he reveals the real criminal. Gaumont-British.

f THERE GOES MY GIRL—Gene Raymond, Ann Sothorn. Screenplay by George Beck. Directed by Ben Holmes. An amusing comedy about an editor using a murder mystery to keep his star girl reporter from getting married. RKO-Radio.

m THEY GAVE HIM A GUN—Spencer Tracy, Gladys George, Franchot Tone. Story by William Joyce Cowan. Directed by W. S. Van Dyke. A weakling whose experiences in the war made a gangster of him—a gun in his hand gave him courage, and the man and woman who were loyal to him. The anti-war effect would be stronger if the case were not so special, and were more convincing. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f THIRTEENTH CHAIR, THE—Dame May Whitty, Lewis Stone, Madge Evans, Elissa Landi. Play by Bayard Veiller. Directed by George B. Seitz. A murder mystery, carefully plotted, which is made tense by the acting of a good cast under good direction. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f \*THIS IS MY AFFAIR—Robert Taylor, Barbara Stanwyck, Victor McLaglen. Screenplay by Allen Rivkin and Lamar Trotti. Directed by William Seiter. Interesting G-man story of the time of President McKinley, which reproduces the atmosphere and people of the time unusually well. 20th Century-Fox.

m TWO WHO DARED—Anna Sten, Henry Wilcoxin. Screenplay by Fedor Otsep. Directed by Eugene Frenke. A British production. The locale of the story is Czarist Russia. A young peasant girl falsely confesses to an affair with the captain of the guards in order to save the life of her former fiance. Though her confession forces the captain to resign his commission, he and the girl are happily reunited. The dances and the costumes are picturesque, and the acting of Anna Sten outstanding. Grand National.

f UNDER THE RED ROBE—Conrad Veidt, Annabella, Reginald Massey. Novel by Stanley J. Weyman. Directed by Victor Seastrom. A story of adventure and romance in the time of Cardinal Richelieu. Good romantic action and atmosphere. 20th Century-Fox.

f WINGS OVER HONOLULU—Wendy Barrie, Ray Milland. Red Book novel by Mildred Cram. Directed by H. C. Potter. A story of a Southern belle who marries a navy flier, and her difficulties in adjusting herself to the life in Honolulu where her husband is stationed. Some very fine flying. Universal.

f WOMAN CHASES MAN—Miriam Hopkins, Joel McCrea. Screenplay by Lynn Root and Frank Felton. Directed by John Blystone. On a mere cobweb of plot swings a comic succession of crazy situations and bright lines, carried off with just the right light touch by an excellent cast. Hilarious for those who like goofy comedy. United Artists.

### FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILMS

f FAMILJEN SOM VAR EN KARUSELL (The Family That Was a Merry-Go-Round)—Carl Barklind, Karin Ekelund. Novel by Gunnar Widegren. Directed by S. Bauman. A talkative but amusing domestic comedy, entirely in Swedish, about the household of a retired naval officer, in which his daughters, a comic servant and a designing widow furnish enough plot to create some interesting characters and mildly laughable situations. Scandinavian.

f VARA BARN OCH ANDRAS UNGAR (Our Children and Other People's Kids)—Just what its title implies. Scandinavian.

(Continued over)

## SHORT FILMS

## INFORMATIONALS

- f ALPINE GRANDEUR—The Swiss Alps, in color. Vitaphone.
- f BEACH SPORTS—RKO-Radio.
- fj BIG LEAGUE—Training camps of the big baseball players. RKO-Radio.
- fj CIRCUS IN WINTER QUARTERS—The circus people training in their Florida quarters. RKO-Radio.
- f DESERT LAND—Creatures of the desert. RKO-Radio.
- f FLORIDA COWBOY—Cowboys of the Everglades. RKO-Radio.
- f FLORAL JAPAN—A Fitzpatrick traveltalk in color—mostly about how Japanese ladies, in their intricate dresses, fit into their garden landscapes. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj GOING PLACES NO. 36—Nassau—sponge industry. Universal.
- fj GOING PLACES NO. 37—Vermont and maple sugar making; Bird Island off Miami; Reginald Denny manufactures model planes. Universal.
- fj HONG KONG, HUB OF THE ORIENT—A Fitzpatrick traveltalk in color—interesting and lovely to look at. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f \*MARCH OF TIME NO. 10 (3rd Series)—A good exposition of the growth of the Irish Republic and the aims of its new constitutions; of prize puzzles (including the illegal ones); and of unemployment in the United States. RKO-Radio.
- f PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 10—Sailboat time; twilight on the trail; a new kind of organ. Paramount.
- f PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 11—Highlights of fishing—crawfishing off the Bahamas; salmon fishing in Alaska; and the ritual of fishing in Japan. Paramount.
- fj PATHE TOPICS NO. 7—Mainly concerned with the acrobatic troupe, the Wallendas, rehearsing; and the function of the white corpuscles in the blood. RKO-Radio.
- f SAFETY IN THE AIR—A picture showing the advancement in aviation and the precautions taken for safety. Paramount.
- f SERENE SIAM—A Fitzpatrick traveltalk in color, picturesque and pleasing. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f SWING STARS—Manufacturing of golf balls, and the various golf champions playing. Paramount.
- f TENNIS TACTICS—Fred Perry's tennis plus Pete Smith's comments—adds up to good entertainment. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f VITAPHONE PICTORIAL REVIEW NO. 10—Rippling rhythm—dancing on floating platforms; the large amount of food used in a New York hotel for breakfast; angora rabbits and the use of their hair; the making of beautiful Moroccan leather—in color. Vitaphone.

## CARTOONS

- fj AIN'T WE GOT FUN (Merrie Melody)—Color cartoon—an old man puts the cat out but is glad to take her back when he is over-run with mice. Vitaphone.
- f BOSCO AND THE PIRATES—An amusing cartoon. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj HOUND AND THE RABBITS, THE—Amusing cartoon about the defeat of a fox. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj IMPRACTICAL JOKER, THE—Betty Boop is annoyed by a practical joker until Grampy fixes him. Paramount.
- fj \*LITTLE HIAWATHA (Silly Symphony)—Little Hiawatha, in return for sparing the small animals when he goes hunting, is saved by them from a bear. Cite. United Artists.
- fj \*MICKEY'S AMATEURS (Mickey Mouse)—Mickey has an amateur radio hour, of which two acts are howlingly funny. United Artists.
- fj MORNING NOON AND NIGHT CLUB—Popeye and Olive Oil dance in a night club until Popeye's rival breaks it up. Paramount.
- f PLEASE KEEP ME IN YOUR DREAMS (Bouncing Ball)—Semi-cartoon with Henry King and his orchestra, Barbara Blake and the bouncing ball. Paramount.
- f RACE OF TIME, THE—Krazy Kat produces a burlesque of the March of Time. Columbia.

- fj UNCLE TOM'S BUNGALOW (Merrie Melody)—A satire on "Uncle Tom's Cabin," highly amusing and done in color. Vitaphone.
- j WILY WEASEL—Oswald sets traps for a weasel who has been stealing eggs and the weasel leads him a merry chase. Universal.

## COMEDIES, MUSICALS, NOVELTIES AND SERIALS

- f COMMUNITY SING NO. 2—Good songs for the audience to join in on. Columbia.
- j DAY AT SANTA ANITA, A—In technicolor—the story of a small girl who owns a winning race horse. Vitaphone.
- f FRIML FAVORITES—Rudolph Friml and his orchestra. Paramount.
- f GRAND HOOTER, THE—Charley Chase. Funny slapstick, about a man and his wife and his lodge. Columbia.
- f MISSISSIPPI MOODS—Fine singing by the Hall Johnson choir. RKO-Radio.
- f RIMAC'S ORCHESTRA—South American music. Vitaphone.
- fj RUSHIN' BALLE—Our Gang inadvertently interferes with a school entertainment. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- j SECRET AGENT X9 (Serial) NO. 12—The crown jewels are finally recovered and the crooks caught. Universal.
- f SCREEN SNAPSHOTS NO. 9—The most interesting parts are shots of the set during the making of "Lost Horizon" and a horse race at Santa Anita. Columbia.
- f SONG OF THE ISLANDS—A Robert Bruce musical romance with the beautiful Hawaiian Islands as background—done in color. Paramount.
- f SOUND DEFECTS—Radio broadcast with sound effects. Vitaphone.
- f THAT MAN SAMSON—The Hall Johnson choir. RKO-Radio.
- j WILD WEST DAYS (Serial) NOS. 1-2—A story of the West in the time of the Indians. A band of crooks are trying to get possession of a tract of land which has a valuable deposit of platinum. Universal.

**NOTE:**—We bring to your attention for the summer the "Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures" giving picture information the year around.

## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

## PUBLICATIONS

The National Board of Review and its Council as an aid to the groups carrying out these objectives furnishes an informational service through its publications.

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# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

Vol. XII, No. 7,



October, 1937



*Paul Muni and Gloria Holden in "The Life of Emile Zola" (see page 9)*

*Published monthly except July, August and September  
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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

m \*ANGEL—See Exceptional Photoplays Department, page 17.

f BACK IN CIRCULATION—Pat O'Brien, Joan Blondell, Margaret Lindsay. Novel by Adela Rogers St. John. Directed by Ray Enright. The hard-boiled treatment given by a sensational newspaper to a murder case and the woman involved, with the revolt of a sob-sister against her editor's tactics. A combination of mystery and comedy, done in slap-dash vigorous style. First National.

f BIG CITY—Spencer Tracy, Luise Rainer. Screenplay by Norman Krasna. Directed by Frank Borzage. An appealing and exciting story about ordinary city people involved in a taxi war ending in a fine scrap with fighters like Jack Dempsey cleaning out the villains. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

fj BORNEO—Mr. and Mrs. Martin Johnson. Narration by Lowell Thomas. Martin Johnson's last film is interesting, educational and moves at a good pace—he tracked down and shot with his camera such inconceivable sights as flying snakes, tree-climbing fish, oysters growing on trees, and the first motion pictures of the proboscis monkey. Suggested for school and library use. Worth keeping permanently available. 20th Century-Fox.

f CHARLIE CHAN ON BROADWAY—Warner Oland. Screenplay by Art Arthur, Robert Ellis and Helen Logan. Directed by Eugene Forde. An unusually neat job of mystery building, with clues well scattered

and the murderer well concealed. The lines are bright, and plenty of good people in the cast. 20th Century-Fox.

m COUNSEL FOR CRIME—Otto Kruger, Douglass Montgomery, Jacqueline Wells. Screenplay by Harold Shumate. Directed by John Brahm. A forceful dramatic story of the relationship, professional and personal, between a notorious lawyer and the high principled son he cannot acknowledge. Splendidly acted, absorbing entertainment. Columbia.

f \*DEAD END—See Exceptional Photoplays Department, page 12.

f FORTY NAUGHTY GIRLS—James Gleason, ZaSu Pitts. Story "The Riddle of the Forty Naughty Girls" by Stuart Palmer. Directed by Edward Cline. Inspector Piper, helped and hindered by Hildegarde Withers, works backstage on the mystery of who killed the unpopular press agent of a musical comedy while the show goes on. Plenty of hilarious incidents. RKO-Radio.

fj HOT WATER—The Jones Family. Screenplay by Robert Chapin and Karen De Wolf. Directed by Frank R. Strayer. Another of the amusing series—this time the Jones Family joins forces to get Father Jones elected mayor on the reform ticket—sometimes their efforts are helpful—at others not so helpful. Good entertainment for the entire family. 20th Century-Fox.

f LIFE BEGINS AT COLLEGE—Ritz Brothers, Nat Pendleton, Gloria Stuart. Adapted from a series of stories by Darrel Ware. Directed by William A. Seiter. A frenzied tale, with musical interruptions, of football, an Indian star player and three goofy tailors who got into college and helped make it a madhouse. Prime entertainment for those who like the Ritz Brothers. Twentieth Century-Fox.

f \*LIFE OF EMILE ZOLA, THE—See Exceptional Photoplays Department, page 9.

f MUSIC FOR MADAME—Nino Martini, Joan Fontaine, Alan Mowbray. Screenplay by Robert Harari. Directed by John Blystone. A bright combination of magnificent singing, grand comedy and an unusual plot about a young tenor whose voice is being sought by the police to identify him as a jewel thief. RKO-Radio.

f MY DEAR MISS ALDRICH—Maureen O'Sullivan, Edna May Oliver, Walter Pidgeon. Screenplay by Herman J. Mankiewicz. Directed by George B. Seitz. A comedy romance about a pretty school mis-

(Continued on page 19)



# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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## The Library and the Films

By GRETCHEN J. GARRISON

*Circulation Department, New York Public Library*

*In response to a demand for information on library-film interests we went to our National Council Member Miss Florence Overton, Supervisor of Branches of the New York Public Library, and through her interest have secured this story of that library's many film activities.*

“NO, the Library does not have motion pictures to lend,” the librarian will tell the inquirer.

This is, however, almost the only request dealing with films that the librarian has to answer in a decided negative. The New York Public Library has many resources in the branch libraries and the central Reference Department which are used by the film industry and by people interested in motion pictures from many points of view.

Librarians have watched with interest the filming of well-known books. In general, providing there is a definite connection with books, they are glad to call attention to worthwhile pictures by means of stills, scrap-books of reviews, special “Books and Films” exhibit corners, and occasionally the showing of local theatre programs.

The influence of films on reading is a much debated matter in library circles. New York librarians differ in their answers to the question “Have motion pictures decreased the reading of books?” No matter what the arguments on either side may be, there is always a noticeable demand for books from which films have been made, whenever such pictures are released.

However, it is not always the story of the picture that is wanted. Readers are inter-

ested in film production and history, in motion picture photography, and in books about historical periods which have been the scenes of various films. More and more books on the subject of motion pictures are being purchased by the library. Such books as J. J. Floherty's *Movie Makers* and Paul Rotha's *Movie Parade* are very popular. Biographies of actors and actresses, histories of motion pictures, books on scenario writing and other technical matters are being added to the library's stock in answer to public demand and in order to build up good collections of books about films.

An incident typical of library happenings occurred one evening at the Central Circulation Department. It was at the time of the announcement of plans to film the life of Cecil Rhodes. A reader asked for a biography of Rhodes and any related material that could be found. Several books were given to the man, who said he was a scenarist. The next reader also wanted information about Rhodes and he was in a desperate hurry for it. He was an actor, interested in the leading role. He was told that the man just ahead of him had been given almost all the available information. The two men began talking eagerly together and between them reached an agreement about the use of the books.

Children's reading is also influenced by motion pictures. Miss Anne Carroll Moore, Superintendent of Work with Children, does not believe that motion pictures have taken the place of reading for children. “They

are, rather, a stimulus to reading," she says.

One children's librarian reports, "*The Last of the Mohicans* is incidentally an example of a book whose popularity has been considerably enhanced by the movies. Steadily the influence of movies on reading is growing. We are, of course, not only deluged with requests for the *Prince and the Pauper* and *Captains Courageous*, but we are also asked for all sorts of non-existent books, as many of the boys and girls seem to feel that all movies are based on books. . . . One day a very serious little chap around thirteen came and asked for Kipling's 'latest book.' When asked exactly what he wanted, he said, 'Well, maybe it isn't out yet.' From this we judged it must be *Kim* inasmuch as the movie has not yet been finished. It was.

Films tie-up very definitely with the book talks given by librarians to school classes. Miss Mabel Williams, Superintendent of Work with Schools, says that the influence of films on reading is most noticeable among the students at vocation and industrial high schools. These young people are non-readers ordinarily, though their interest in motion pictures can be led to an interest in the books from which films have been made. Through these films, they have become conscious of books and reading as a pleasurable experience.

Young people's reading clubs, organized by librarians in many of the branches, occasionally make use of the already existing interest of young people in motion pictures. Last winter an experiment was undertaken. A Young Reviewers club, affiliated with the national group, was formed. All members of the group read the books from which the films they reviewed had been taken. Informal discussions were held and some writing of motion picture reviews was attempted. A selected group of high school boys and girls were members of this club.

The Library's Readers' Advisory Service also receives inquiries from people interested in the films, according to Miss Jennie M. Flexner, Readers' Adviser. This special service includes an interview with the reader to discover his interests and particular needs, and the making of a list of books suitable for his use.

The Theatre Collection is the largest of its kind in any public institution in the United States, with the possible exception of the Library of Congress. It contains current and historical information about the stage and motion pictures.

Many valuable gifts have been made to the Theatre Collection. Universal Pictures Corporation turned over to the Library one of the "key" sets of stills, of which there are 584 volumes. When Inspiration Pictures went out of business in the late 1920's, their stills and pressbooks were given to the Library, thus providing a very complete record of the early silent films.

The Library solicits from the New York offices of film companies, the shooting scripts of outstanding pictures and of various types of films such as westerns and musicals. At times, film companies present bound scripts, which are often illustrated and in some cases autographed by the players. Two such scripts are *It Happened One Night* and *Dinner at Eight*.

Press books, of which there are 240 volumes in the collection, bring out all sorts of information about each picture and the actors in it as suggestions for publicity.

Though this is primarily a reference collection, the staff will make up exhibits for branch libraries when requested. Some of the stills used in the exhibit "The Motion Picture as an Art Form," described below, were provided by the Theatre Collection. A display made for one of the branches which specializes in art and drama, contrasted the film and stage versions of musical shows by means of pictures from each.

Motion picture reviews are another important part of the Theatre Collection. Since 1930, the library has kept in scrapbook form one or more reviews of each feature film released in New York for regular adult audiences.

This collection is constantly used by the publicity, script and business offices of film companies. George Freedley, librarian-in-charge, says "Writers for motion picture magazines draw largely on our biographical material, whether books, periodicals, or newspaper clippings. The serious evaluator makes use principally of the material filed



under subject. Artists use stills as a source for their work. The audience is principally concerned with the complete, for New York, file of criticisms."

He adds, "On the other hand the first concern of the Theatre Collection must be the preservation of theatrical records and the collecting of them."

The library's Picture Collection, with over 700,000 classified pictures, is one of the largest circulating collections in the world. The regular picture files are used in many ways by actors, writers and research workers. A special collection of 30,000 stills is classified by subject. The following subject headings indicate the many ways in which these pictures may be utilized in answering requests for picture information: Broken leg apparatus, Animal skin cradle, Dutch 17th century cradle, Bird's-eye views of dancing formations, Raw hide whip, Purse-snatching, Strangulation, Shaving in England 14th century, Sidewalk blackboard for employment agency, Female impersonators.

"The Motion Picture as an Art Form," arranged by the staff of Picture Collection, was a pioneer exhibit. It was first shown in 1933. In May 1936, new material to bring the history of films as an art form up-to-date was added, and the collection exhibited again. Both showings aroused wide interest. The exhibit was sent to various colleges and universities, including Antioch and the University of Chicago. It has been requested for showing in Australia!

A new link between the film world and the book world is being forged by the use of microfilm. The recording of books, manuscripts, music, newspapers and other material on 35mm. film is a development which is watched with great interest by librarians.

"We have borrowed from the motion picture industry certain terms and phrases," says Vernon D. Tate, Chief of the Division of Photographic Reproduction and Research, the National Archives. "... We employ their processing machines and equipment, but micro-copying has advanced to the place where it can stand on its own feet. Micro-photography cannot, therefore, and must not be considered a branch of the motion picture industry."

The 35mm. film used differs from motion picture film in that it is non-inflammable. It is, incidentally, the same type of film that is used for home movies.

The New York Public Library was a pioneer in the filming of newspapers, beginning this as early as 1934. Experimentation with public use of these film copies has continued since then, with increasingly satisfactory results as projectors and methods of handling film have been perfected. The films are kept wound on a spool and threaded into the projectors. A crank at the right of the box-like projector is turned by the reader until he finds the page that he wishes. The screen is placed at the bottom of the projector and the printed matter (enlarged about 50% above the size of the original) is thrown on the screen from the top of the box. The projectors are three feet high, thirteen by twenty inches at the bottom and taper slightly at the top. Four are now in use in the Newspaper Division, and more are needed.

The saving of storage space made possible by using microfilm copies is of great importance. For example, the *New York Times* file for 1914-1918 occupies 1½ cubic feet as against 59 cubic feet needed for the regular volumes. According to Ralph H. Carruthers, in charge of the Library's experimentation in micro-photography, "One hundred pages of the *Saturday Evening Post* could be put on six feet of standard microfilm."

Increasing and varied use of microfilm is prophesied by librarians who have been working with it. Some of the uses of micro-photography are the preservation of materials liable to disintegration, such as newspapers and manuscripts; as a cheap method of making a collection of literature on a given subject or for a given period, including rare and out-of-print manuscripts; for recording documents of all kinds; and for publishing, which is as yet an untouched field.

The various services of the Library are, of course, available free of charge to those who wish to use them. The Library is eager to obtain and to make available all kinds of information about films and their production and history.

# You Can't Forget the Films

By BETTINA GUNCZY

NO one intentionally takes a holiday like the sailor who on shore leave goes for a boat ride. On the other hand, the intention for most vacationists is to get as far away as possible from the everyday, whatever that may be. Thus when starting on a European motor trip for my 1937 summer vacation the decision was not to think of films for a while. But one can hardly fail to think of something when it is continually brought to mind by the eye, and in making this decision to forget films, there was a forgetfulness of the fact they could not be forgotten. American films were ever bringing themselves to the attention by a "reclame" here and there and everywhere in towns and villages in many countries.

Algiers, seeing it for the first time, was very picturesque and interesting, from the native quarter reached by narrow streets of steps mounting higher and higher to the equally high new residential section with the home of the Governor General and the fine panorama of the harbor, but perhaps all this is no longer so exciting to the Algerian and he goes for excitement to see *The Case of the Velvet Claws* which was currently running.

One may be sightseeing in Lisbon thinking of the Moorish castle which he has just seen high in Cintra and of how different the architecture is and how different the life of the people seems but when a placard announces a showing of *Manhattan Maid* another city far from Portugal's shore is brought to mind. One finds himself suddenly at home abroad.

Mostar the ancient city in Yugoslavia famous for its Roman arched bridge offered still another attraction, doubtless far more interesting to its ladies behind their black veils. This was Dorothy Lamour in *The Jungle Queen*. One morning we were happily driving along the road by the river Vrbas watching the enormous rafts being so cleverly manipulated over the turbulent waters by two fez-capped Bosniaks when at a narrow passage in the curving road we rubbed

fenders with a local car as an alternative to joining the rafts below. Upon reaching the next town which bore the musical name of Banja Luka, we decided to have repairs and so while this was being done we observed the interesting mosque in the center of the town and the activity of the market place. In this looking about we found the local cinemas offering *The Broadway Gondolier* and *The Princess Comes Across*, with Carole Lombard. Well, why not visit a theatre after all! But before having decided upon which was to be the one, the corso hour arrived and it seemed so interesting to watch the evening parade of the town folk on the blocked off streets that we did not make the movie that night and the next day found us on our way.

This day another reminder of the American influence in the film world was observed for the theatre at Karvolac near where we stopped for afternoon coffee was named the Edison. Zagreb, the very busy city of Yugoslavia, which has had such phenomenal growth within the years since the war, kept one so busy seeing it that not much in movie matters could be noted. However, we did notice at an attractive street corner the offices of 20th Century-Fox, which caused the sudden thought, it is the twentieth century or we wouldn't be seeing all these films in this distant land. And advertised at the Luxor Theatre was the film, *Carocci*, which we can all recognize. This name incidentally seemed to belong more appropriately to this city than to some of the American cities with their Luxor theatres. Also being shown in this city was *Jadran Tarzan Neustrasivi*, which translated means, I suppose, with my inadequacy with the language, *Tarzan and His Mate*.

There are many, many cows in Europe, in fact often it was necessary to bring the car almost to a stop until certain cows particularly curious about American cars and wanting to get a close-up slowly removed themselves from the road, not at all hurried by



the herder—if one were at hand—as he too was interested in taking a long look and in hearing the “ta ta” of the horn which seemed to cause special delight along some of the more infrequently motor traveled roads of Yugoslavia. So perhaps considering this cow interest it was not surprising to see advertised *The Millionaire Cowboy*. Now for myself at this time, if interested in cowboys, the preference was for the picturesque variety of the Hungarian “puszta” with his very full skirt-like trousers and his little hat, but it is easy to imagine how these people would be equally interested in the high booted, big hatted figure of the American film cowboy.

And so we move on to movies in Hungary. Budapest, that glamorous city with its many beautiful buildings and fine bridges crossing the Danube, was full of American visitors enjoying these sights. But if these visitors wanted to rest from sightseeing and hearing too, for certainly they had all been listening to gypsy bands playing the “Czardas”, they could go to the American talkies. I noted being shown *The Good Earth* at the Corso Theatre and Jean Harlow was widely advertised in *Wife vs. Secretary*.

After Budapest came Vienna and this amusement loving city seems to have a goodly share of “kinos”. The one named for the opera, the “Opern” was showing that usual favorite *The Thin Man*. Showing here also were *The Good Earth*, and Jean Harlow in *Lustige Sünder*. Other American films were *The Green Light*, *Swing High*, *Swing Low* and *Jagd auf Gangster*, which gives to the *Midnight Taxi*, the title *Hunt the Gangster*, the last word of which apparently could not be translated. And, of course, in this operetta country some musicals would surely be found. Two noted were, *Top Hat* and *Roberta*.

Here in Vienna the intention not to purposely look into films or film affairs was forgotten when upon the suggestion of Dr. Eric Mann, a Viennese who interestingly illustrates his American lectures on Austria by means of films, a visit was made to the office of Selenophon.

Selenophon is the organization which produces the Austrian educational or cultural

films under the direction of Doctor Lanske of the State Ministry of Commerce and Communications. A number of these short films have been shown in America and those who have seen them realize they combine a high artistic quality with their educational value. Some titles which our readers may call to mind as familiar are: *Village Symphony*, *Baroque Arts in Austria*, *Here Lived, Worked and Died*, *Alpine Garden*, *A Day in Vienna*, *Salzburg*, *City of Festivals*. Director Mauthner, chief of Selenophon, said that twenty-four cultural films were made in a year and that perhaps a half of these were exhibited outside of Austria as films of international not merely national interest. At his invitation we reviewed in the projection room on the eighth floor, quite high for Vienna where they don't go in for streamlined skyscrapers, one of the films of the new season entitled *Made in Austria*, a fashion film, very interestingly done as to composition and photography for a subject of this type. The Austrian theatres offer a demand for short subjects for, according to Director Mauthner, double features are forbidden, newsreels must be run weekly and one of the cultural short subjects if the feature length permits it. There is likewise an interest in the shorts made in America, particularly the ever popular Disneys. The Selenophon organization also dubs American films for Austrian audiences, two, I remember as being so prepared were RKO's *Mary of Scotland* and Universal's *Three Smart Girls*. All of this impresses one with the international importance of the motion picture as an art and as a business.

A little jaunt from Vienna was made to Baden and there we found that in spite of Baden's reputation as an international gaming resort one would not have to play for pastime, for there was the alternative of seeing *Held vom Texas* featuring Tom Mix. We drove from Baden past nearby Mayerling, where hidden in the wooded hills is the hunting lodge in which Crown Prince Rudolf of Austria met his mysterious death and which provides the story and the title of a film showing now in New York.

Salzburg, the city of music and festival

was, as usual, full of visitors from all the wide world. While films were not a part of the festival program this year as last, when Metro's *Romeo and Juliet* and the *Great Ziegfeld* were shown, still several American films were running at the theatres. Two current were: *Born to Dance* and *Modern Times*—a Chaplin never dies. A British film which was exhibited in America, *Storm Over England*, was also being shown.

Now over the 10,000 feet, Grossglockner Alpine Road and into Italy where we find more familiar films to greet us. At Parma, the city famous for its sweet violets, there was *Il terrore de Circo* with Warner Oland. However good or bad our Italian we film addicts know what picture that is. In Rome was being shown, appropriately it seemed, *The White Angel*. We were reminded of seeing advertised here two years ago Eddie Cantor in *Scandal in the Musee* not, of course, *Roman Scandals*, as we knew it.

Civitavecchia, on the road to Rome, included because of its intriguing name, which name however was forgotten long enough to note the name of a film currently showing, Robert Taylor in *Marguerite Gautier*. This of course we knew to be *Camille* and we wondered why it read Robert Taylor instead of Greta Garbo, when the film had the title of the famous lady of the camellias. Perhaps it is because the handsome Robert Taylor lures the ladies of Italy to the theatres for some extra heart throbs even as he does those of his own country.

From Naples we crossed to the beautiful Isle of Capri. The water in the bay was quite rough that day, in fact many people received an untimely shower in their effort to see the famed Blue Grotto, so it seemed after this surprise taste of the sea not surprising to see *Mutiny on the Bounty*, as the cinema attraction.

Finally we took ship for "the States" and even here we were reminded once more of the place the motion picture can have in appropriate entertainment, for with a group of European doctors on board enroute to a medical conference in Chicago the film for the first evening's diversion was *The Story of Louis Pasteur*. Here was a film made in America of a French personality

being shown on an Italian liner to an enthusiastically responsive polyglot audience.

So the conclusion to this recounting of familiar films everywhere is not a new one, but a verification of the often repeated phrase *the motion picture is the universal language*.

## Motion Picture Courses

A University Motion Picture Course, under the joint auspices of the University and the National Board of Review, is being offered for the fourth year at the School of Education of New York University.

The course, given by distinguished lecturers and illustrated by film material, is useful to the teacher, to the social worker, and to the layman working in community motion-picture programs because it discusses practical problems of schools, social agencies, and community organizations in relation to films of both the entertainment and educational types. University credit is given for this course or it can be taken without credit, if so desired. Graduates of the course are eligible to become regular members of the Reviewing Committees of the National Board of Review.

Meetings of the course are held Thursday evenings, at 8:15 o'clock, in the Washington Square Branch, School of Education auditorium, 41 West Fourth Street, New York City.

Columbia University is offering a University Extension Film Study in which the National Board is cooperating, entitled "Motion Picture Parade." This is to be a series of twenty evenings devoted to the motion picture—illustrated with interesting films and with discussion by leading authorities and artists.

All meetings will be held weekly on Wednesday evenings, beginning October 27th, in the McMillin Academic Theater, Columbia University—Broadway at 116th Street. Admission is by series subscription ticket.

A course on the "History and Appreciation of the Cinema" is being given at the Institute for Adult Education of De Witt

(Continued on page 19)



# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS

## DEPARTMENT

This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of *Exceptional* and *Honorable*

*Mention*. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.

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## The Life of Emile Zola

Written by Heinz Herald, Geza Herczeg and Norman Reilly Raine, directed by William Dieterle, photographed by Tony Gaudio, art director, Anton Grot, music by Max Steiner, produced and distributed by Warner Bros.

### The cast

Emile Zola	Paul Muni
Alexandrine Zola	Gloria Holden
Captain Alfred Dreyfus	Joseph Schildkraut
Lucie Dreyfus	Gale Sondergaard
Pierre Dreyfus	Dickie Moore
Jeanne Dreyfus	Rolla Gourvitch
Maitre Labori	Donald Crisp
Georges Clemenceau	Grant Mitchell
Charpentier	John Litel
M. Richards	Lumsden Hare
Helen Richards	Marcia Mae Jones
Minister of War	Gilbert Emery
Chief of Staff	Harry Davenport
Asst. Chief of Staff	Paul Everton
Colonel Sandherr	Walter Kingsford
Colonel Picquart	Henry O'Neill
Major Walsin-Esterhazy	Robert Barrat
Major Dort	Louis Calhern
Nana	Erin O'Brien Moore
M. Cavaignac	Montagu Love
Major Henry	Robert Warwick
M. Van Cassell	Frank Sheridan
Anatole France	Morris Carnovsky
Paul Cezanne	Vladimir Sokoloff
M. Delagorgue	Charles Richman
Madame Zola	Florence Roberts

IT is a commonplace of film criticism that a motion picture is supposed to *move*. *The Life of Emile Zola* not only moves but it achieves a physical equivalent of the theme which Zola himself proclaims: "Truth is on the march!" The world, at the end, seems to have been shifted ahead an inch. Any film which can create so cinematic an illusion is indeed a triumph.

That truth is on the march is not only an extraordinary theme for the movies or any other medium, it is a dangerously abstract

one as well. Success is achieved here because the terms are concrete and center around the very realistic story of Captain Dreyfus. *The Life of Emile Zola*, in other words, is biography, only incidentally. Warner Brothers' essays in biography are really misnamed; if truth is on the march in *Zola*, science was on the march in *The Story of Louis Pasteur*. This film begins to be really absorbing only when the camera leaves Zola, already a pudgy millionaire, and his wife before their ornate fireplace and starts unwinding the threads of the Dreyfus story. There were some very interesting moments before this, created by Paul Muni's brilliant interpretation of the title role—his youthful meeting with Nana at a cafe table where you literally see his imagination being captured by her plight; the revelation, at the bookshop, that he is made; and his transformation into a well-fed, well-to-do and respected author. All this is very interesting but, having been told, doesn't seem to make much difference.

The film *acts* only when the Dreyfus story begins to unfold, and from that moment on is as engrossing and moving a drama as the movies have ever presented. It is still Zola's story, of course; the opening reels of exposition having stated what kind of person Zola is, you simply know he will jump into the breach. What you don't expect is his terrifying apparent failure against a judicial machine determined to uphold a military machine. These trial scenes are directed for the very last shred of excitement by Mr. Dieterle; they are conducted with such brutal injustice that the unusual

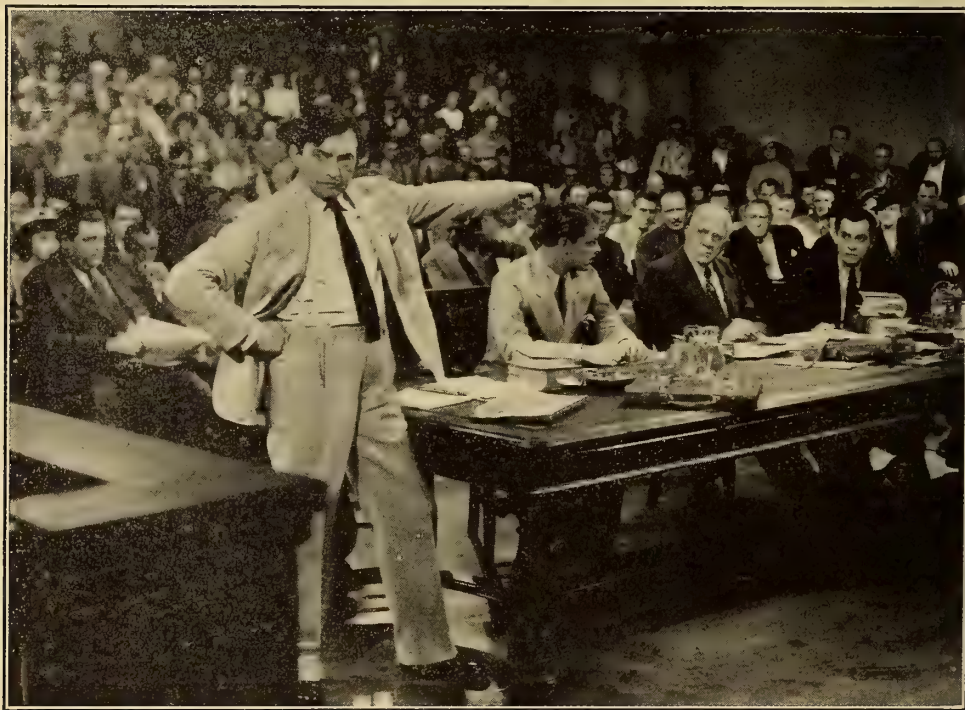
length of Zola's speech is hardly noticed, so much is his protest needed. Zola's conviction and his flight to England make all the more poignant his and Dreyfus' vindication by the new military regime and all the more impressive his whispered comment from the sick-bed, "Truth is on the march."

Mr. Schildkraut's Dreyfus is second only to Muni's Zola. Donald Crisp's attorney,

Henry O'Neill's Picquart, Vladimir Sokoloff's Cezanne, and Erin O'Brien-Moore's Nana are equally commendable. Gloria Holden's Madame Zola seemed wooden and Gale Sondergaard's Madame Dreyfus almost fatal, but these defects are erased by the consistently fine qualities of this film.

R. G.

*Rated exceptional.*



*Claude Rains and Edward Norris in the Courtroom Scene of "They Won't Forget"*

## They Won't Forget

Adapted from Ward Greene's novel, "Death in the Deep South" by Robert Rossen and Aben Kandel, directed by Mervyn LeRoy, photographed by Arthur Edeson. Art director Robert Haas, music and arrangements by Adolph Deutsch. Produced and distributed by Warner-First National.

### The cast

Andy Griffith	.....	Claude Rains
Robert Hale	.....	Edward Norris
Sybil Hale	.....	Gloria Dickson
Gleason	.....	Otto Kruger
Bill Brock	.....	Allyn Joslyn
Mary Clay	.....	Lana Turner
Joe Turner	.....	Elisha Cook, Jr.
Detective Lanear	.....	Cy Kendall
Tump Redwine	.....	Clinton Rosemond
Carlisle P. Buxton	.....	E. Allyn Warren
Mrs. Hale	.....	Elizabeth Risdon

Jim Timberlake	.....	Clifford Soubier
Detective Pindar	.....	Granville Bates
Mrs. Mountford	.....	Ann Shoemaker
Governor Mountford	.....	Paul Everton
Harmon	.....	Donald Briggs
Mrs. Clay	.....	Sybil Harris
Shattuck Clay	.....	Trevor Bardette
Luther Clay	.....	Elliott Sullivan
Ransome Clay	.....	Wilmer Hines
Drugstore clerk	.....	Eddie Acuff
Reporter	.....	Frank Faylan
Judge Moore	.....	Leonard Mudie
Confederate soldiers	.....	Harry Davenport, Harry Beresford, Edward McWade

WITH that fine crusading spirit that has enlivened so many of their films in recent years, the Warner Brothers, through Mervyn LeRoy, have turned now to an attack on that greatest of blots



on the pages of American history, lynch law, and have, in *They Won't Forget*, created a motion picture of valiant and enduring worth. More particularly, *They Won't Forget* is the story of a single lynching—that of Leo Frank in Marietta, Georgia, some two decades ago—that in its larger implications it is an attack on the mob spirit wherever it has flamed or may flame again.

"Death in the Deep South" is what Ward Greene called his novel on which the LeRoy film is based, and nowhere is there any effort, as there was in *Fury*, to hide the location of the story. The picture opens with a parade on Confederate Memorial Day, and a group of tired Confederate veterans, preparing to march, ask each other whether they and the cause they fought for won't soon be forgotten. From that point on the Southern locale of the story is emphasized. This is the South, U. S. A.; time, the twentieth century.

Now, the South is notoriously sensitive about such matters. It is sensitive about chain-gangs, about share-cropping, about lynchings. But its sensitiveness extends, usually, up to the point where something might be done about the evils that beset it. Then it rears up in all its pride, whacks a few union men trying to organize tenant farmers, and, through its elected representatives, fights down an anti-lynching bill. Then it goes on about its business.

To the everlasting credit of those who would build a new and enlightened South, it must be added that Southern women's clubs have organized to fight lynching, and that they are being aided by most of the Southern newspapers. But there is still in the South too much of the spirit recently expressed by a Southern newspaperman, who told me, "Sure, lynchings are horrible. I've covered four of them, including that of Leo Frank, and I know they are. But I honestly believe that if there hadn't been a few lynchings, the South would be one hell of a place to live in." It must be a great comfort to the victims of mob violence, especially those unjustly accused, to know that their deaths are in such a good cause.

As for *They Won't Forget*, it is amazing

in its faithfulness to the outlines of the case on which it is based. Its leading character is a business school instructor instead of the head of a pencil factory. He is not Jewish, and therefore the racial animosities that the Frank case stirred in the South are ignored. But otherwise the case against Robert Hale, in the film, and the case against Leo Frank, in life, are one and the same. A young girl is found murdered in a Southern city. A Northerner is accused of the murder, and a prosecuting attorney, realizing that this is his great opportunity for political advancement, determines to convict the alleged murderer. By appealing to sectional prejudices without regard to truth and the rules of evidence, he gains a conviction. The governor of the state, knowing that his action inevitably means the ruin of his own political life, nevertheless acts as his conscience orders him, and commutes the accused man's sentence from death to life imprisonment, in order that further investigation may be carried on. A mob gathers, apparently intent on lynching the governor, but is stopped by the militia. It then turns its attention to the wretched victim of a prosecutor's ambition, and with the cruelty of which only human beings are capable snuffs out his life.

So it was with Leo Frank, and so it is with the Robert Hale of the picture. The Hugh Dorsey who prosecuted Leo Frank finds his counterpart in the Andy Griffin of Claude Rains. And the Governor Slaton, who risked his life to commute Leo Frank's sentence, is called Governor Mountford in the film, but he is still Governor Slaton, a martyr in the cause of truth and justice.

*They Won't Forget* is no pat mystery story. It is never clearly established that Robert Hale is innocent of the murder with which he is charged, nor on the other hand that anyone else is guilty. The indictment here is not against the lynching of an innocent man, but rather against the dreadfulness which is lynching itself, and against the fierce and uncontrolled hatreds that make lynchings possible.

As a film, *They Won't Forget* moves at an even, unhysterical pace, with no trick

effects or camera angles to distort its simple and powerful tale. At the end, Mr. LeRoy, the director, has worked in one bit of filmic symbolism that is appalling in its rightness and that tells the story of lynching in all its horror without the risk of censorship. With the exception of the Southern accents, which are more willing than accurate, the work of the cast is uniformly good. Claude Rains' Andy Griffin stands out because he has more to do than the others, but there are also striking performances by Allyn Joslyn, Edward Norris, Gloria Dickson, Lana Turner, and others.

The South may not like *They Won't Forget*, but it is certain to be moved by it, and there is reason to hope that the picture will aid those who are fighting the lynching evil in that section of the country in their efforts to see that there are no more such deaths in the deep South.

E. W.

*Rated Exceptional.*

## Dead End

*Adapted by Lillian Hellman from Sidney Kingsley's play, directed by William Wyler, photographed by Gregg Toland, art director Richard Day, musical director Alfred Newman. Produced by Samuel Goldwyn, associate producer Merritt Hulbard, distributed by United Artists.*

### *The cast*

Drina .....	Sylvia Sydney
Dave .....	Joel McCrea
Baby Face Martin .....	Humphrey Bogart
Kay .....	Wendy Barrie
Francey .....	Claire Trevor
Hunk .....	Allen Jenkins
Mrs. Martin .....	Marjorie Main
Tommy .....	Billy Halop
Dippy .....	Huntz Hall
Angel .....	Bobby Jordan
Spit .....	Leo Gorcey
T. B. ....	Gagriel Dell
Milty .....	Bernard Punsley
Philip .....	Charles Peck
Mr. Griswold .....	Minor Watson
Mulligan .....	James Burke
Doorman .....	Ward Bond
Mrs. Connell .....	Elizageth Risdon
Mrs. Fenner .....	Esther Dale

*The rating of this picture as exceptional implies a high standard in its production, but even more important than its technical excellence is its social importance. Therefore, instead of the usual critical review we are offering the following commentary written by Langdon W. Post, New York City Tenement House Commissioner, who is a member of the National Board*

*of Review's Executive Committee, in the belief that what he has to say of the film is of more interest than an aesthetic discussion.*

AT the last Annual Conference-Luncheon of the National Board of Review I said that in my opinion the play *Dead End* had done more to educate those people who had seen it about the horrible influences surrounding the children of the slums than any other single thing which I could mention. I pointed out that without any explicit pointing of a moral it was better propaganda for decent housing than a dozen lectures or pages of statistics and I said, "I wonder if *Dead End* is going to be ruined by the movies or if the movies are going to make it as great a picture as it is a play. I wonder if it is really going to carry the message and the truth and the integrity which the author intended that it should into the millions of villages and towns in this country. I think it is the kind of a picture, mind you, that can have such value or can have no value whatever."

Now I have seen it and I am satisfied that the producers have done a splendid job. They have followed the play very closely and, fortunately, it was a play which could be successfully transformed into a picture with comparatively little change so far as its general outlines are concerned. In fact, the greater opportunity for change of scene in the picture makes it even more effective as an implicit indictment of the slums, and yet in the picture as in the play the conditions are allowed to speak for themselves. I believe it is much stronger because there is so little deliberate pointing of a moral: No one with any sensitivity could see it without drawing his own conclusions about the evils of slum life.

It is just along these lines that moving pictures can have their greatest educational value. They must be primarily dramatic and a picture which is merely an illustrated lecture would be a terrible flop. On the other hand, I have often said to my audiences in lecturing about the slums that I wish I could take them to see the actual conditions, which would be far more effective than anything I could say. This is just what *Dead End* does. When you are able





*The Slum Boys in "Dead End"*

to see "How the Other Half Lives" it is not necessary for anyone to tell you that such conditions breed misery and crime and disease. You only wonder how anyone escapes them.

There remains, of course, the problem of what to do about the slums and that requires another kind of education which is perhaps even slower and more difficult, but that is not to any extent the business of moving pictures. I still have confidence that when the American people are aware of the serious problem and its dangers they will find the solution. The moving picture *Dead End* will do a great deal to make them aware of the problem even though they may not be conscious of it as such while they are watching the drama. That is perhaps just as well. The most effective education often does not seem to be education at all at the time. The important thing is to get across an honest and convincing presentation of conditions as they actually exist. I can testify from personal observation that the conditions portrayed in *Dead End* are not exaggerated—that they can be matched in thousands of tenement buildings in New

York City and other cities. *Dead End* is not a problem play in the old fashioned sense, but it is one of the most effective presentations of a great social problem which I have ever seen.

*Rated exceptional.*

## The Lower Depths

(NA DNYE)

Screen play by E. Zamiatine and J. Compанееz from Maxim Gorki's play, dialogue adapted by Jean Renoir and Charles Spaak, directed by Jean Renoir. Settings by Eugene Laurie and Hughes Laurent, music by Jean Wiener, photographed by F. Bourgas, English titles by Julian Leigh. Produced in France by Albatros, distributed in U. S. by Arthur Mayer and Joseph Burstyn.

### The cast

<i>Pepel</i> .....	Jean Gabin
<i>The Baron</i> .....	Louis Jouvet
<i>Vassilissa</i> .....	Suzy Prim
<i>Nastia</i> .....	Jany Holt
<i>Kostylev</i> .....	Vladimir Sokoloff
<i>Natasha</i> .....	June Astor
<i>The actor</i> .....	Robert Le Vigan
<i>The Count</i> .....	Camille Bert
<i>Luka</i> .....	Rene Genin

<i>Satine</i> .....	<i>Paul Temps</i>
<i>Jabot</i> .....	<i>Robert Ozanne</i>
<i>Kletsch</i> .....	<i>Saint-Iles</i>
<i>Alioshka</i> .....	<i>Maurice Bazuot</i>
<i>The inspector</i> .....	<i>Gabriello</i>
<i>Felix</i> .....	<i>Larive</i>
<i>Anna</i> .....	<i>Natalie Alexeeff</i>

IT is better to forget as thoroughly as possible, when one sees this film, the play that Maxim Gorki wrote for the stage, which is unique among the world-known modern classics of the theatre. This is not a criticism of the film—it is merely a warning that trying to check up on the film with memories of the play's text, or of the Moscow Art Theatre's performance of it, is distractingly pointless, and interferes with whole-heartedly opening up to something that deserves to be taken in its own terms and on its own right. Gorki himself told M. Renoir, who made the film, that the play was impossible to screen: "This play where nothing happens, where the whole thing is atmosphere, nothing but atmosphere. The film people will break their teeth on it." But Renoir refused to be dared out of his

attempt, and walked off with the French critics' prize as the "best film of the year."

Renoir, being French, quite sensibly set out, *not* to make a Russian film (which nobody but the Russians can really do) but to make a human drama, taking Gorki's setting and people and through the medium of the French temperament and French actors making something "happen." Gorki, six months before his death last year, approved of this version of his play: for him, of course, with the changes that had come in Russia during the thirty-some years since the play was written, his own "lower depths" had ceased to exist, and along with them the mystic resignation with which the old-time Russian could wait for the "better man" for whom all humanity hoped, saying "Man—that is truth! We must respect man, not humiliate him by pity! To be well fed? Man is higher! Man is higher than a full belly!" The point of Gorki's play (the literal meaning of its Russian title is "At the Bottom") was that there is a dormant beauty in the



*The Derelicts in "The Lower Depths"*



soul of even the most degraded derelict, which is the important thing even though society keeps him forever down among the dregs of humanity. Renoir, perhaps feeling that that type of down-and-outer is anachronistic now, close to show that some people get to the bottom through flaws of will and character, and equally that others, through will and character, can escape and rise. With this idea, that class environment is something the individual can fight against, win or lose, instead of resignedly accepting, there can be drama, something can "happen."

What happens is that a Baron—a charming, cynical, fatalistic gambler—drifts downward till he lands in a miserable lodging house, the verminous refuge of a lot of failures forgotten by the world, and a thief, the son of a thief with apparently nothing but petty thievery ahead of him, manages to get on his feet and step upward, partly through a sort of redemption by love (he takes a girl with him) and partly through determination. The rest of the people—miserly landlord, his scheming wife, a broken-down consumptive actor, a harlot who finds her escape in day-dreams fed by cheap novels, others not so definitely individualized—either die, from disease, violence or suicide, or go on miserably existing, drinking, squabbling, just managing not to starve.

It is not an equivalent of Gorki's play, but something different, and a film with depth and strength to it. That depth and strength come from a remarkable use of the materials with which a movie director works—his setting and his actors and the way he plays his camera upon them. The setting, without obtrusive emphasis on details, builds up inescapably into the sort of soil that produces such creatures as the people are, and the people exist as a natural growth of it. Individual actors—Jean Gabin as the thief, Louis Jouvet as the Baron, Vladimir Sokoloff as the landlord—stand out in the memory, but behind them is the hand of the director, not making brilliant technical gestures but moulding his material with the understanding and assurance of a masterful creative artist.

J. S. H.

*Rated Exceptional.*

## Baltic Deputy

*Adapted by Davil Deli, Alexander Zarkhi, Joseph Heifetz and Leonid Rakhmanov, from a story by Rakhfanob, directed by Alexander Zarkhi and Joseph Heifetz, photographed by Hoissaye Kaplan. Produced by Lenfilm, distributed by Amkino.*

### The cast

*Professor Polezhayev . . . . . Nikolai Cherkassov*  
*His wife . . . . . Marta Domasheva*  
*Bocharov . . . . . Boris Livanov*  
*Vorobiev . . . . . Otto Zhakov*  
*Kuprianov . . . . . Alexander Melnikov*

AS in *Chapayev* the Russians have here gone for a hero to an actual figure in the history of their revolution, but instead of a man who became literally a soldier and fought battles they have taken a man of science, whose leadership was of the mind, and whose courage was more spiritual than physical.

The story the film tells of him is simple, and strangely strong and moving. It is of an old man of the scholarly kind, a professor and writer of scientific books with the dry crochets and mannerisms of his profession, whose mind and spirit stayed young and alive and growing. When the revolution came he knew what it was about and for, and he was with it. It meant a break with his own kind of people and finding his place among rough and uneducated folks coping with the hardships of a new way of living. So internationally eminent, being a professor of Oxford and Cambridge and a holder of the Newton Mantle, that foreign governments and universities offered him posts of honor and distinguished, untroubled service if he would become an exile and accept their eager invitations, he stayed with his own countrymen and assumed his share in building up the new order. It was not a question of choice—at the age of seventy-five there was still, for him, only one road ahead and he had to follow it. He found his place, and an honored one, far indeed from his old field of secluded activity among books in a library: he became the delegate to the Leningrad Soviet for the sailors of the Baltic fleet.

Here again is the remarkable gift the Russians have in their films of creating a conviction that we are watching real human

beings. Not only the professor, a completely realized figure of an old man of definite personality and profession brilliantly embodied by a young actor in his early thirties, but the other people, particularly his wife, and the Baltic sailor whose sturdy "He was a friend of Newton" gives the old man the assurance of muscular, unquestioning loyalty among his new comrades. The two young directors of the film have already become masters in their native tradition of creating the illusion of actual life being lived, presenting their story mostly in simple details that have the seemingly uncontrived effect of something that actually happened. Only in a few clichés of the older Eisenstein-Pudovkin school — men marching, banners carried, slogans from Lenin—do they fall into the out-worn ways of mass-rousing. Happily they do not end the picture with an heroic death—the very last is the old professor back in his library, perched on a ladder before his book shelves. In its quiet way—characteristic of the whole film—it leaves the final conviction of a living spirit still going on.

J. S. H.

*Rated Honorable Mention.*

## The Spanish Earth

*Made by Joris Ivens, photographed by John Ferno, with commentary and narration by Ernest Hemingway, musical arrangements by Marc Blitzstein and Virgil Thompson. Collaborators, Archibald MacLeish and Lillian Hellman.*

JORIS IVENS, whose film of the filling in of the Zuyder Zee, *The New Earth*, is one of the best of documentary films, went to Spain to make pictures of the people in the fighting there. *The Spanish Earth* is what he has brought back and put together to visualize his conception of the struggle, with a running commentary written and spoken by Ernest Hemingway.

The title of the film is truly its subject—the earth, and what it means to Spaniards who finally have some of it for their own, and their fight for it. The picture opens with men working on the soil, and it closes with the completion of a watering system that means the soil will yield food for the fighters who are defending it. Along with

this fundamental subject, so literal and so symbolic at the same time, there is the warfare, the defense of Madrid, the training and going into battle of soldiers, and for a climax the saving of the vital line of communication with Valencia, the road the enemy are attacking—this an equivalent in military strategy to the life-giving flooding of the fields.

This framework provides a dramatic build-up, rich in meaning, that is solidly sufficient in structure, but the life of it is in the people, how their fight changes and stiffens them, and how they keep up their work and their indomitable clinging to their land while war storms over and about them. Ivens staged no battles—he had to take what he could get to with his camera, with no help from a studio's elaborate technical staff, and without our knowledge that these things actually happened, and the impact their truth gives them, some of this fighting would seem tame beside the spectacular effects that Hollywood can contrive. But Ivens got close to many people, and their living lives, with the same deep human sympathy and understanding he has always shown—and the same potent artistry in communicating it. He gives a picture of people in war like nothing the movies have had before. It is not exciting as craftily built drama is exciting, but in a profounder, more sobering and impressive way. It is life, history being lived.

*The Spanish Earth* was made among the defenders of Madrid and in the countryside around Madrid. It is loyalist in its effect—implicitly in the pictures, explicitly in Hemingway's heart-felt but unhysterical commentary. If that be propaganda—well, what?

J. S. H.

*Rated Honorable Mention.*

## The Thirteen

*Scenario by Ivan Prut and Mikhail Romm, directed by Mikhail Romm, photographed by Boris Volchek. Produced by Mosfilm in Moscow, distributed by Amkino.*

### The cast

<i>The Commander</i> .....	Ivan Novoseltsev
<i>His Wife</i> .....	Helen Kuzmina
<i>The Geologist</i> .....	Alezei Chistiakov
<i>Lieut. Col. Skuratov</i> .....	Arsen Fait



## RED ARMY SOLDIERS:

Akchurin	Llya Kuznetsov
Timoshkin	Andrei Dolinin
Sviridenko	Pyotr Masokha
Petrov	Pavel Yudin
Levkoev	David Zolts
Balandin	Vassily Kulakov
Zhurba	Sergei Krilov
Muradov	Alexander Repinov
Bakhtiulin	Andrei Kuliev
Gusev	Nikolai Kriukov

ALL the attributes that go towards making a film exciting, dramatic and absorbing are present in this picture. It is a simple story with heroism as the keynote and the desert as a background. The director succeeds admirably in creating suspense and a mood of terror by superb photography, intelligent direction and editing.

Ten Red Army men, their commander, his wife and a geologist, make up the cast, the thirteen. They are traveling across the desert to a railroad station in Ashkabad and stop for water at a desert well but find that someone has filled it with sand. Driven out of their course by a sandstorm, they stumble across some guns of foreign make and rounds of ammunition. In their search, they come across water, which is evidently the water source of some "Basmach" or desert bandits. The story deals with the battle between these thirteen people and bandits that greatly outnumber them. It depicts their adventures and the struggle to survive, with no food and very little water available. One survivor remains to greet the rescuing party that comes at the last minute when everything seems hopeless.

Nature supplies sets that are superior to any artificially made, no matter how well,

and this picture is an excellent example to prove the point. The desert, with its sand dunes, beautiful patterns created by the wind is a weird fascinating sight to see. Calm and peaceful one moment—the next a raging, roaring monster. When the storm breaks out, breath-taking scenes appear that make you forget that you are in a theatre—you actually become a participant. No doubt the exceptional photography by cameraman Boris Volchek is responsible for this effect. The plot is practically the same as that of *The Lost Patrol* and has been done in the past in one form or another but rarely with such cinematic skill and sincerity. The actors all perform so naturally and convincingly that you have the experience of having met real, live people and not just images that appear on the screen and are being directed. Several sequences are outstanding gems. In particular, one terrible scene where a parched Red army man goes mad from lack of water and runs out to tell the enemy there is no water in the oasis—and is shot down by his own commander. Another splendid sequence is where two army men try to create the impression there is plenty of water by pretending to wash themselves. Actually, they make this illusion by sound effects, all done in such an impressive manner that it creates a terrifying mood and suspense.

Although the picture is melodramatic—it builds up to a tremendous climax and sustains your interest throughout. What lifts this picture far above the average is the treatment of the soldiers, their camaraderie, their human qualities.

*Rated Honorable Mention.*

F. W.

## Critical Comment

*Under this heading pictures will be discussed that in the judgment of the Exceptional Photoplays Committee do not gain the rating of Exceptional yet possess qualities that we have found our readers are interested in having talked about.*

### Hi, Angel!

LUBITSCH'S first official directorial effort since *The Merry Widow* (which just isn't mentioned in any circles, polite or otherwise) is a tasty little bon-bon,

perfumed, if you will, but exactly to the fragrance required.

*Angel* probably will not be received mildly—those who don't like it will hate it: why? There may be something more involved than merely whether the picture is good or not. Some will say, as they have before, that

'It isn't worthy of serious consideration,' regardless of how it has been done, or 'I wouldn't waste time even to discuss such an inane thing!'

It is difficult to understand the school of thought that weighs its cinema as a butcher would, and rates a film the higher for its social significance, despite its filmic shortcomings. What matter if the subject is of world-importance if the film unfolds like a series of stills, or is a complete distortion of human behavior? Pictures like *The Last Days of Pompeii*, *Cleopatra*, *The Sign of the Cross*, *The Road Back* and *The World Moves On* would, in this way, receive much more attention, if not acclaim, than *Alice in Wonderland*, *Broken Blossoms*, *Chu Chin Chow*, *The Passing of the Third Floor Back* and *The Most Dangerous Game*, whose subject matter might preclude their inclusion with 'important' pictures. In the same vein, a friend of mine assured me that *La Maternelle* was a far finer film than *Crime et Chatiment* because, of all things, 'the destinies of little children are of far greater concern and importance to the majority than the fate of a murderer.' How do you like that? Similarly, many have dismissed *Frankenstein*, *Dracula* and *Dracula's Daughter* as insults to the adult mind, thereby indicating themselves to be the children to whom they would relegate such juvenility.

Since it is being transposed into another medium when filmed, no subject can definitely be said to be unworthy of serious consideration. Only its cinematic qualities may be so judged. Must it be demonstrated that dramatic license is the prerogative of any story, and it is the interpretation of it into terms of the camera that forms the basis of judgment? The really inconsequential films are such as *Exclusive*, *Diamond Jim*, *There Goes My Girl*, *The Toast of New York*, not because of their fundamental unimportance but because of untruthful presentation. Surely, nothing could be of less significance than the fripperies of a feather-brained heiress, or the consistently and liquidly flippant gentleman of leisure, yet *It Happened One Night* and *The Thin Man* were, not without reason,

selected by press and public alike as the best of the year.

And, although in a rather different, more serious vein than usual, Mr. Lubitsch has given us in *Angel* what might be referred to as honest sophistication (No, they're not necessarily antonymous). He has deftly made believable and absorbing a tale that very easily might not have been, in almost any other hands. The three rather strange people involved may seem somewhat jaded in one way or another, but they are manipulated to look and talk and respond like people who don't know a camera is peering into their innermost thoughts, and consequently move quietly and effectively to the anticipated but none the less effective climax, plentifully supplied and surrounded with the delightful humor which has been absent from our screens since the advent of *Desire*.

J. A. McA.

## Summer Season Notes

WHEN the end of the year comes there are some films that came along this summer that will leave agreeable memories for one reason or another.

The most novel of them is *Topper*, whose novelty really goes back to some of the earliest of camera tricks but enjoys the benefit of the most up-to-date technical skill. It deals, gaily and sometimes rather touchingly, with the efforts of the ghosts of two irresponsible and likeable people to do a good deed in atonement for their care-free lives of nothing but play, to earn them some justification in the hereafter. Their good deed is merely to arouse some joy in living in a stodgy banker, and the joy they arouse is fairly trivial, but it makes a pleasant comedy, with many hilarious incidents and full of good humor. One of the pleasantest things about it is that it shows how deft and jolly a comedienne Constance Bennett can be when she is free from the necessity of playing emotional parts.

*I Met Him in Paris* is jolly too, in Claudette Colbert's lighter style. One is most likely to remember the picture for its delightful snow scenes in the Alps. *Stella*



*Dallas* has an immense sob appeal and a plot that strains the sophisticated credulity—not in its elements but in its working-out. But it also has the advantage of some of King Vidor's most skillful and sympathetic direction, and performances by Barbara Stanwyck and Anne Shirley and Alan Hale that are better than we are accustomed to from them. *That Certain Woman* also has plot trouble, but Bette Davis makes it worth seeing.

*The Prisoner of Zenda* has at last its ideal screen production, and whatever charm this tale of romantic adventure in a make-believe kingdom still has in this present day—(a great many people find the charm as potent as ever)—is realized to the fullest extent by a handsome and lively production, and the engaging personalities of Ronald Colman, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., and Madeleine Carroll. *Souls at Sea* is a vigorous tale of the slave trade, with a part made to order for Gary Cooper's talents and—for a change—a George Raft role that is neither gigolo or rat. There is plenty of exciting incident in it, too.

There is also the new Cagney film, *Something to Sing About*, to mention with satisfaction. Its one drawback is that it runs short of story toward the end and pads itself out with situations obviously contrived to keep the thing going longer, but its pleasant story of a young orchestra leader and dancer adventuring into the movies has some of the keenest slants on Hollywood that the screen has treated itself to. And let no one who expects James Cagney to be always a tough guy in tough melodrama overlook the fact that in this lighter kind of thing he is still one of the most skillful and resourceful actors that we have. J. S. H.

(Continued from page 2)

tress from Nebraska who inherits New York's largest newspaper, and infuses a feminine touch into its management. Exaggerated but entertaining. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

fj \*100 MEN AND A GIRL—Deanna Durbin, Adolphe Menjou, Leopold Stokowski. Screenplay by Hans Kraly. Directed by Henry Koster. Deanna Durbin as a likeable Little Miss Fix-It who finally gets jobs for a hundred unemployed musicians, with the benevolent assistance of Leopold

## Book Films

“BOOK WEEK” comes as certainly as the leaves fall with the autumn and so we do not need to announce that there is to be a 1937 Book Week, but rather to make announcement of the dates and the theme.

The dates this year are November 14th to 20th and the theme is *Books—the Magic Highway to Adventure*.

This is the 16th annual Book Week observance and each year, with the steady adaptation of books to the screen, grows the need for a list of book-films, thus the National Board of Review is preparing its 16th annual SELECTED BOOK-FILMS.

This list includes books and plays from which movies have been made, films with book value tie-up, biographical material serving as the source of films and foreign films. It serves as a sign post on this highway to adventure in seeing good films and reading good books.

It can be secured from the National Board of Review or the National Association of Book Publishers in connection with the Book Week material. The price is 10c.

(Continued from page 8)

Clinton High School, N. Y. C., under the sponsorship of the National Board of Review. There are to be 15 sessions, consisting of lectures by noted authorities and film showings. Classes will be held every Wednesday afternoon at 3 o'clock beginning September 29th. Material for the course has been arranged by Mr. Frank Ward and the instructor is Mr. Bernard Kassoy. The fee for the entire course is \$1.00.

Stokowski. The music is excellent, the story abounds in human interest and amusing bits. Universal.

fj ROARING SIX GUNS—Kermit Maynard. Novel by James Oliver Curwood. Directed by J. P. McGowan. A Western in vigorous, virile style, with some refreshing differences in plot and characters. Ambassador.

f SOMETHING TO SING ABOUT—James Cagney, Evelyn Daw. Written and directed by Victor Schertzinger. A jolly and

lively song-and-dance story of a hooper's adventures in the movies, and how studio publicity nearly wrecked his marriage. Cagney in a gay role of comedian and dancer, a new girl with a delightful voice and some truthful slants on Hollywood. Grand National.

- f \*STAGE DOOR—Ginger Rogers, Katharine Hepburn, Adolphe Menjou. Play by Edna Ferber and George S. Kaufman. Directed by Gregory La Cava. An out-of-the-ordinary story of a group of girls living in an actors' boarding house, and their ups and downs in the struggle to win fame on the stage. Vastly amusing as well as moving, played by an all-round excellent cast, with Katharine Hepburn and Ginger Rogers in the best performances of their careers. RKO-Radio.
- m THAT CERTAIN WOMAN—Bette Davis, Henry Fonda, Ian Hunter. Screenplay and direction by Edmund Goulding. Story of how a piece of bad luck in girlhood brought long suffering to a woman. Good acting and direction give reality to a theatrical drama. First National.
- m \*THEY WON'T FORGET—See Exceptional Photoplays Department, page 10.
- f VARSITY SHOW—Dick Powell, Ted Healy, Fred Waring and his Pennsylvanians. Screenplay by Warren Duff and Sig Herzig. Directed by William Keighley. A lively musical show, with several fresh strains to give it novelty—and some of Fred Waring's most popular troupers, Rosemary and Priscilla Lane, Johnny Downs and Poley. A Broadway director makes a comeback by helping stage a varsity show for his alma mater. Warner.
- f WESTERN GOLD—Smith Ballew, Heather Angel. Novel by Harold Bell Wright. Directed by Howard Bretherton. Gold, the much needed commodity in the war days of 1860, fails to come through from the West until the outlaws are tracked down by a lanky young trail rider. This part is well played by Smith Ballew, a newcomer. Scenery and riding are also good. 20th Century-Fox.
- m WIFE, DOCTOR AND NURSE—Warner Baxter, Loretta Young, Virginia Bruce. Screenplay by Kathryn Scola, Darrell Ware and Lamar Trotti. Directed by Walter Lang. A fascinating doctor and two women he couldn't do without—a triangle without any villainies and with an unusual outcome. Generally light and amusing, though it skates over some serious problems. 20th Century-Fox.
- m WOMEN MEN MARRY—George Murphy, Josephine Hutchinson. Screenplay by Matt Taylor. Directed by Earl Taggart. A fairly heavy tale of a deceived young husband, enlivened by racy dialogue and melodramatic tension. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

## SHORT SUBJECTS

### INFORMATIONALS

- f CROSSING THE SAHARA—Interesting travelogue in color. Vitaphone.
- fj \*4 SMART DOGS (Spotlight Series)—The terrier, pointer, police and especially the shepherd dog who exhibits his skill in a remarkable and fascinating sequence. Paramount.
- f GOLF MAGIC—Champions. Columbia.
- f \*MARCH OF TIME NO. 1 (4th Series)—An excellent issue—telling of insect pests; and of the background of China's struggle against Japan. RKO-Radio.
- fj MEXICO MURAL (Magic Carpet Series)—Interesting and attractive visit to picturesque spots in Mexico. 20th Century-Fox.
- fj \*PRIVATE LIFE OF THE GANNETS—The beautiful air and water birds in their island home off the British Isles. Educational.
- f SOAK THE POOR (Crime Doesn't Pay Series)—Breaking up a criminal racket that preyed on poor families on relief. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f SOMMARENS JAEMTLAND (Summer in Jaemtland)—Scenery and outdoor activities in the Province of Jaemtland. Swedish production. Scandinavian.
- fj SPORT'S GREATEST THRILLS—Accidents in all kinds of sports. Columbia.
- f VITAPHONE PICTORIAL REVIEW NO. 13—Covering: auto-driving tests; book printing; reducing; women's furs. Vitaphone.
- f WEEKEND I KONGENS BY, EN (A Weekend in Copenhagen)—Swedish production. Scandinavian.

### CARTOONS

- fj LONESOME GHOSTS (Mickey Mouse)—Mickey and his pals try to rid a house of four playful ghosts with hilarious results. RKO-Radio.
- fj NEW DEAL SHOW, THE (Betty Boop)—Betty puts on a show displaying amusing gadgets for animals' comfort. Paramount.
- fj \*OLD MILL, THE (Silly Symphony)—A strange and lovely symphony in music and color of night life in a deserted mill. RKO-Radio.
- fj PLUTO'S QUINPULETS—Pluto and his frolicsome pups acquire astonishing color designs in a mad scramble with paint pots and a compressed air tube. RKO-Radio.

### COMEDIES, MUSICALS, NOVELTIES AND SERIALS

- fj FISHY TALES—Our Gang. Spanky's ruse for saving Alfalfa from a fight with Butch. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- j JUNGLE MENACE (Serial) NOS. 1-6—Starring Frank Buck. A promising serial with many well-known actors and good production values. The locale is in Bengal. Columbia.
- f MOTOR MANIACS—Dizzy stunts by the adventuring cameramen. 20th Century-Fox.
- j S O S COAST GUARD (Serial) NOS. 1-8.—An officer of the Coast Guard gets track of a foreign spy who is trying to ship a rare chemical element abroad. Rather above the general quality of serials. Republic.
- fj SCREEN SNAPSHOTS NO. 12—Visiting Hollywood's famous places. Columbia.
- f STRANGER THAN FICTION NOS. 41-42—Stones that float, wood that sinks; ice-cream cone-eating squirrels; mountain of glass; under-water stunts; etc. Universal.

## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

### PUBLICATIONS

National Board of Review Magazine (monthly)	
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Selected Pictures Catalog (annual)	25c
Special Film Lists	10c ea.
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# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

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MEDICAL DIVISION



*Katharine Hepburn and Ginger Rogers in "Stage Door" (See page 12)*

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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

f ADOLF ARMSTARKE (Adolf Armstrong) —Adolf Jahr, Alice Skoglund. Directed by Sigurd Wallen. Entirely in Swedish. A lively and amusing comedy, in which a group of present-day people are taken back, in dream fashion, to the middle ages, where their various relationships function in medieval style. Scandinavian Talking Pictures.

fj AFRICAN HOLIDAY—An interesting travelogue, photographed by Mr. and Mrs. Harry C. Pearson, of hunting in Africa, some of it similar to other films of its kind but with some new things—the ocap, for instance. The commentary is pleasanter than usual to listen to. Harry C. Pearson.

m ALCATRAZ ISLAND—John Litel, Ann Sheridan. Screenplay by Crane Wilbur. Directed by William McGann. The penal fortress at Alcatraz Island is the background for this melodrama of a racketeer who, convicted for income tax evasion, determines to be a model prisoner even though his private enemy No. 1 becomes a fellow-inmate. First National.

f ALI BABA GOES TO TOWN—Eddie Cantor, Roland Young, Virginia Field. Screenplay by Gene Towne, Graham Baker, Gene Fowler. Directed by David Butler. Eddie Cantor falls asleep on the set during the making of a picture in Hollywood and dreams he is in old Bagdad. Typical Cantor humor, with a few cracks at the New Deal, and the Raymond Scott Quintet playing exuberant swing. 20th Century-Fox.

m AWFUL TRUTH, THE—Irene Dunne, Cary Grant, Ralph Bellamy. Play by Arthur

Richman. Directed by Leo McCarey. A comedy closely bordering on farce, of a wife who cannot fall out of love with her husband even after they are divorced, and wins him back again. Columbia.

fj BOOTS AND SADDLES — Gene Autry, Smiley Burnette. Screenplay by Jack Nattleford and Oliver Drake. Directed by Joe Kane. A western ranch heavily mortgaged is inherited by a young English boy. It is saved for him when the wild horses are broken and sold to the army. There is riding and comedy but not so much shooting as in the usual western. Republic.

f BREAKFAST FOR TWO—Barbara Stanwyck, Herbert Marshall, Glenda Farrell, Eric Blore. Screenplay by David Garth. Directed by Edward Santell. Farce comedy about a girl who falls for a playboy and stops at nothing in order to reform him and prevent his marriage to her rival. Rather silly story but it furnishes plenty of laughs. RKO-Radio.

m BRIDE WORE RED, THE—Joan Crawford, Franchot Tone, Robert Young. Play by Ferenc Molnar. Directed by Dorothy Arzner. A singer from a cheap cabaret on the Trieste waterfront is given two weeks of plenty of money at a fashionable Tyrolean resort—her problem, to escape going back to her former life, is whether to steal another girl's wealthy fiancé, or marry the village postman. A lot of bright dialogue, a good cast and fine settings. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f \*CONQUEST—See Exceptional Photoplays Department, page 14.

f DANGER - LOVE AT WORK—Jack Haley, Ann Sothorn, Mary Boland. Screenplay by James Edward Grant. Directed by Otto L. Preminger. A goofy comedy, in which a young lawyer has a crazy time getting the members of a wildly eccentric family to sign some papers. 20th Century-Fox.

f DR. SYN—George Arliss, Margaret Lockwood, Roy Emerton, John Loder. Novel by Russell Thorndike. Directed by Roy William Neill. British production. A fascinating story of smuggling in 18th Century England telling of a beloved village parson's efforts to conceal his identity as the smugglers' sinister head from the relentless revenue official. Splendid acting and authentic atmosphere. Gaumont-British.

f \*DOUBLE WEDDING — William Powell, Myrna Loy, Florence Rice, John Beal. Play "Great Love" by Ferenc Molnar. Directed by Richard Thorpe. A sparkling madcap comedy about the wooing of a prim and proper young business woman by a charming, irresponsible artist. Exceedingly clever and hilarious entertainment. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

(Continued on page 18)



# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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## The Documentary Method in British Films

By PAUL ROTH A

*This is the text of an address delivered by Mr. Rotha in the Motion Picture Course at New York University, given under the auspices of the School of Education of the University and the National Board of Review. Mr. Rotha is the author of a number of outstanding books on the motion picture, "The Film Till Now," "Celluloid, the Film To-day," "Documentary Film," "Movie Parade." He is Production Supervisor of Strand Films, London, but for the present is in this country in connection with a special activity of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library.*

SINCE my arrival in New York City about three weeks ago, one thing in particular has interested me: that is the importance attached to the presentation of news in America. By radio, by newspapers, by magazines, by films, everywhere there is an outflow of news. I am struck, moreover, by the growing use of pictures for the presentation of news. And in analyzing this non-stop flow, there seem to be two different ways of presenting facts or news. Firstly, there is straightforward reporting which says this is this and that is how it happened. For this no great call is made for creative ability. The job is simply that of accurate reporting, of giving information as briefly as possible. Secondly, there is the same purpose of statement of facts, but they are presented in such a way that they become dramatic. The imagination of the ordinary person is caught by what may be a common everyday event. And that is what I am going to talk about tonight: the creative presentation of facts as we find them in everyday life.

From the early days back in the nineties,

the makers of movies have been concerned with presenting people and things as they exist around us in everyday life. Some of you may have seen the first efforts at movie-making by the Lumière brothers in France in 1895. These pioneers knew that the camera's first ability was to photograph what was happening round about them. They therefore made simple, ingenuous, little films of workmen coming out of a factory, of men demolishing a building: records of things which were taking place at that moment. From that there has grown up the vast use of the movie as a newsreel. As the years went by, we had funeral processions, the Delhi Durbar, earthquakes, the Tsar at play, actual scenes of the World War: a million events filmed by both amateurs and professionals. Throughout it all the camera was being used in its fundamental capacity: to record a picture of reality.

It was not long, however, before the element of fiction crept into the movie and films began to tell a story. You have all heard of the *Great Train Robbery*, in 1903, and its use of a plot. But even in the earlier fiction films, real trees and real landscapes and real buildings played their part. In the early silent days it was more economical to film stories against actual backgrounds. Only for interiors was a studio used. And, despite their fictional element, many of these films kept in touch with reality either in their subject or their background. Films like *The Birth of a Nation*, the "Bill" Hart westerns, and the Mack

Sennett slapstick comedies; the outdoor films made by the Swedes after the War; epics like *The Covered Wagon* and *The Iron Horse*; these were story pictures but they were stories set for the most part against real surroundings. D. W. Griffith was perhaps the greatest user of natural background. You may remember how in *Way Down East* he used the elements of wind and snow and ice as part of his integral theme.

But Hollywood was later to be influenced by the studio methods of the Germans who had perfected the interior-made film. When German directors like Murnau, Lubitsch, and Leni and their entourage of cameramen and designers and writers, came to Hollywood, the influence of their studio outlook had a marked effect on the American movie. More and more films were made in artificially-created surroundings. If a scene of a street was wanted the street was built on the studio lot. The movie became studio-bound and the introduction of the talking film did much to seal the studio doors.

What had in the meantime happened to the recorders of real life? All this while both professionals and amateurs—I believe the role of the amateur in the movie can be important—had been using the movie camera to reproduce the real things which were going on round about them. When explorers went exploring they took movie cameras with them. Some brought back good records; some brought back bad. Scientists realized that the movie camera was capable of recording phenomena for purely scientific purposes. Many biological films were made showing the life cycle of a plant or the birth of a worm. But these film makers used the movie camera just as had the Lumière brothers in 1895.

The film stock and the mechanical equipment were improved but the medium was still being used merely to record.

It did not occur to these realists that the way in which they used their cameras could be creative; that the instruments of the movie were purely mechanical, and that they had to be used creatively if a film was to have more significance than that of mere representation.

It was not until after the World War, in 1920, that the first really important step was made in the use of natural background for its own sake. Robert Flaherty went up to the Hudson Bay Territory on an expedition for a fur corporation. He took with him a movie camera. And because Flaherty was a deeply sensitive artist and a brilliant photographer, he filmed not a sensational made-up story of a husky Eskimo battling another husky Eskimo over the head for the sake of a female Eskimo, but the primitive drama of the struggle for food, of the fight against hunger which was the real, the elemental story of the Eskimo people. In *Nanook of the North*, Flaherty used his remarkable gift for observation, his feeling for the beauty of natural movements, in such a way that the film became something more than a travel film, or a record of how the Eskimos lived. The film itself had life, the character of Nanook was a real character, the blizzards were real blizzards and not bits of feather or breakfast food, and the building of the igloo was so perfectly done that even today, seventeen years later, it is one of the most beautiful and most simple pieces of motion picture photography.

Flaherty went on to make more naturalistic films: *Moana* the story of the tattoo in Samoa; *Man of Aran* with its timeless story of man set against the sky; *Elephant Boy* the story of the Indian jungle; and one excursion into the hard, matter-of-fact world of industry in *Industrial Britain*, for which Flaherty went up to the midlands of England. There he captured the spirit of craftsmanship amongst the potters and glassblowers and the men who made light-house lenses and experimental air engines. Beneath the pall of smoke and dirt he found and filmed the beauty of workmanship. This, then, is the Flaherty documentary tradition: taking a theme which arises from natural surroundings and building something of it which is non-fictional but creative in terms of the movie itself.

During the same time, around 1924 and 1925, another and quite different school of realism was growing up as a result of changing social and political circumstances in Russia; a school which was also using the living world around it as material for mo-



vies. Lenin saw the importance of the cinema as a means of communication and education. He saw historic events happening. He said "Film them." They were filmed and there began the development of the news reel and chronicle cinema in Russia. There grew also a school of brilliantly creative technicians like Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Dovjenko, who realized that in these living themes there was material out of which powerful films could be shaped. Films like *Potemkin*, *Ten Days That Shook the World*, *Mother*, and *The End of Saint Petersburg* represented important steps in the realistic method because they were films of contemporary problems.

Beyond their use of real life, the Russians discovered one very significant thing about the movie itself. They realized that the whole principle of film making lay not only in the selection and arrangement of the things which you photographed but equally in the actual materials with which you were working. They began an analysis of the film strip from which they developed a theory of constructive editing. That is to say that the writing of the scenario, the filming of the scenes, the acting and the stagecraft, were dependent in the long run upon the way in which these scenes were assembled and edited. This was not a new idea. It had been explored by Griffith, especially in his *Intolerance*. That film was an amazing piece of editing; small flashes of this shot and that put together in such a way that the emotional appeal of the whole was quite staggering in a film made in 1916. *Intolerance* had a strong influence on the Russians and it was in circulation in the U. S. S. R. for many years.

Perhaps the most important Russian film from our point of view tonight was *Turksib*. It was a film without a story, a film which simply described the need for building a railroad from the north to the south, to link Turkestan with Siberia. But its director handled his material with such dramatic effect that the film, like *Nanook*, became more than a mere description. The facts of the problem, the actual achievement of the task, were presented so forcefully that the railroad became a matter of significance to the audience.

In Europe there were other strivings after realism. There had grown up a school of *avant-garde* film makers in Paris. In the same way that in the immediate pre-War days young men had experimented in new forms of painting, music and sculpture, so after the War the movies offered a field for other experiment. Many of their films are today only of pyrotechnical interest but there was one person in the group who was to be important in screen realism—Alberto Cavalcanti. He watched the amusing tricks of the movie evolved by René Clair, Jean Epstein, Jacques Feyder, and the others; saw that the camera had a facility for recording things as they occurred in everyday life; and decided to make a cross-section of twenty-four hours in Paris. He took the beauty of the city and put it sharply against the ugliness; he took wealth and put it against poverty. He let typical people appear and re-appear throughout the picture as the hours of the day crept on. In 1926, *Rien Que Les Heures* was the first symphony of a city. Cavalcanti used the film to portray reality as it existed close at hand, as distinct from Flaherty's method of travelling abroad among primitive people.

*Rien Que Les Heures* was succeeded six months later by another city symphony, Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin*. Ruttmann did much that Cavalcanti had done but did it on a bigger and more impersonal scale. But despite all the realities of the scene Ruttmann's *Berlin* created only a superficial representation of the city. Never for one moment did the film get underneath the surface of events to show some of the social and economic issues. *Berlin* was a bad influence. There followed a whole series of films about lives in great cities observed from the symphonic point of view.

But in 1928, the scene moves to England and here we begin to get a more sociological purpose in the realist film. John Grierson was a young Scotsman who had been investigating audience reactions and doing motion picture criticism in America. In England, he persuaded a Department of the British Government, the Empire Marketing Board, to experiment with film as a medium for "bringing alive" England and the Empire on the English screen in order to publicize

certain aspects of national and Empire life. As a beginning Grierson made the film *Drifters*. It was a simple picture, the story of the North Sea herring fleet, a story of the men who went out on the drifters, of how they got their catch, of the race against storm as they made their way back to port, and of the distribution of the herring catch throughout the country. Without story or actors Grierson made of this a dramatic theme, so catching the poetry of the sea and the dignity of human labor that the film immediately found an enthusiastic audience in the public theatres of Britain. As a result of *Drifters*, an experimental unit under the direction of Grierson was started, to make not just one film at a time like *Drifters*, but a group of films by a group of young directors.

The early English documentary films were inclined to be impressionist in style. They romanticized industry and the countryside. They dramatized steel and shipping and agriculture. They used ordinary people and real surroundings as distinct from the artificial methods of the commercial studios. They built up a picture of Britain and parts of the Empire. The best known of these pictures today are *The Country Comes to Town*, *Aero-Engine*, and *O'er Hill and Dale* by directors like Basil Wright and Arthur Elton.

Apart from the films themselves, the major importance of the E. M. B. documentary workshop was that not only did the Government realize the value of using the film as a medium of public relations, but big industrial firms and public utility concerns also realized the power of the movie. The oil companies, gas and electricity boards, transport, the air lines, all these bodies in England began to use the documentary film as a means of putting on the screen subjects which are of national importance in ordinary, everyday life. They saw that here was something quite different from the old-fashioned advertising film. It was a new form of public education from which prestige could be secured. Typical films of this time were *The Song of Ceylon*, *Weather Forecast*, *The Face of Britain*, and *The Voice of Britain*.

The British documentary films are some-

times said by foreign critics to be among the most advanced in technique. Probably one of the reasons why the English realists developed good technical qualities was that they had little money with which to make their films. The very fact that they could not afford expensive equipment and, in comparison with the makers of story-films, could use only a restricted amount of film stock for each film, contributed to the building up of the alleged technical excellence of the films. At the same time these films were destined to be shown in public theatres and they had thus to stand side by side with the latest feature pictures from Hollywood and Elstree.

About eighteen months ago this documentary film movement in England reached a critical point in its development. As most press critics acknowledged, Britain and the British people were being put on the screen with a sincerity and truth which all the millions of pounds invested in story films had failed to do. Over a period of seven years there had been made somewhere about two hundred and fifty films dealing with almost every aspect of English life. From Flaherty had been learned the value of observation; from the Russians the use of editing and natural acting; from Cavalcanti the importance of filming things on one's own doorstep instead of voyaging off to the ends of the earth. From Government and Industry money to make films was forthcoming. And there came a moment of what might be called stock-taking. We knew that we were building up a picture of reality. But what was the purpose behind it?

At an early stage we had realized that the sociological approach to the movie was the only important one. Let me give you an example of what I mean by "sociological approach." The film *Shipyard* might well have been a pictorial description of the building of a ship. But, by using the documentary method, this film became something more than a technical description of how keel plates were laid down, girders put up and deck plates rivetted. It so happened that this ship was being built in the north of England in a town which depended for its prosperity entirely on shipbuilding. That



is to say, behind the money passed across the pub counter for a glass of beer, behind the marketing in the shops, behind the crowd at the football game, behind every aspect of the town's life, there lay the drama of the ship being built on the stocks. Everywhere you looked in the town, from every street down which you walked, you could always see the ship. As she grew higher month by month, the ship became part of the town itself. The huge mass of iron and steel appeared to be growing out of the houses. After six months she had become so much a part of the town that when the day should come for the ship to be launched, there would be a gap in the lives of the people. Not only would they no longer see the ship from their windows, but as she went down the stocks it would mean a gap in most men's pockets because there might not be another job to replace her. That was the sociological meaning I wanted to express behind the building of the ship. I tried to show that the life of the town depended on the work in the shipyard. I tried to show that because this ship had been ordered there would be money to spend and lighter hearts, for at any rate a while, in this North Country town. The ending was both a triumph and a tragedy for the town. The day arrived when a special Pullman train came up from London bringing the heads of the company and their wives and friends. They mounted the flag-draped rostrum. The bottle of champagne was ready. All over the yard were the men who had built this superb ship, watching her as she lay ready to taste the sea for the first time. These men were torn within themselves. They saw the triumph of the thing they had built with their own hands over a period of eleven months. But at the same time they knew that tomorrow morning there would be no more work in the shipyard. That was the way the film ended. I have gone into this method of treatment in some detail to make clear to you what I mean by the sociological approach in the documentary film.

There came, then, an important change in the English realist movement about eighteen months ago. This arose from the fact that we began to recognize the powers of the

camera and microphone for interviewing and reporting. There appeared to be a close link between the film and journalism. The personal interview method in the American *March of Time* and in some news-reels began to interest us. We began to take our microphones into the streets and into the houses of people and get faithful reporting. Films like *Housing Problems* and *Enough to Eat?* marked an entirely new style in documentary film technique. Not only this but we tried to represent people as people. In most of our early films people were without life or character. We regarded them impersonally. But we still do not use professional actors. We prefer to use ordinary people and build them up as characters by enlisting their sympathy in the films which we are making. To sum up, the whole of the British documentary movement is based on two beliefs: that a film can build a dramatic picture of reality and that the film can be used as a social commentator.

I have stressed this sociological approach to film making because it is the keystone of most of our work in England. It is the link between theory and practice. It is the link which, in the opinion of some educationalists today, is missing between the educational system and the outside world. Our educational system has been developed to a great extent on the method of trying to train the child to grow up into an individual knowing something about everything all the time, which in a world of such wide horizons and such complex routines as is ours today is impossible. The gap between what a child is taught and what happens in the outside world grows wider. This is where I believe the film and the radio can be of increasing importance, not only between the school and everyday life, but between ordinary citizens and everyday life. It has become a habit for the ordinary person to say "*I am not particularly interested in methods of government. I am not particularly interested in public services. I pay my taxes and that is all I need contribute.*" Such an attitude means that there is a weakening in the essential qualities of citizenship which are a vital necessity to a democratic system. That is why I am interested in any demand on

the part of the public for facts and knowledge and information such as I mentioned at the beginning of my talk. That is why our documentary films in England are probing more and more into issues of public interest and matters of civic reference. We are trying to capture the minds and imaginations of the ordinary audience for the everyday things of life by presenting contemporary problems in a dramatic style.

You will see tonight, for example, a film about social service schemes in England. You may say this is an uninspiring subject. But I ask you to note how we have dramatized it. You will see a film about smoke pollution, about the fact that in England the nation's health, as well as the nation's property, is being attacked by smoke. You will see a film about the growth of international communications contrasted with the building up of national barriers in Europe. These are all subjects which to us are of great national importance and these films have been made primarily for consumption in England. They were not intended for public showing in the United States.

You are entitled to ask two questions resulting from what I have been saying. Firstly, who made these films? I don't mean who creatively produced them, but rather who sponsored them? Why should the name of the Gas Industry be attached to a film about schools? What interest has the Gas Industry in education? Why should a body like the National Council of Social Service make a film about unemployment? The answer is that these bodies produce films about their activities in order to tell the everyday person what they are doing. We in the documentary movement must take the responsibility of having persuaded such bodies to make films of wider social significance than perhaps they had originally planned. As a result, a big national body like the Gas Industry finances a film which makes no reference whatsoever to gas, but deals purely with the English educational system and the need for rebuilding many of England's schools. From the point of view of national prestige, it is important that the Gas Industry should be interested in education.

Secondly, you are entitled to ask: why is

there no similar documentary movement in America? There are two answers. There is a documentary movement in the United States. The Resettlement Administration (now the Farm Security Administration) has sponsored two films, *The Plow That Broke the Plain* and *The River*,\* by Pare Lorentz, both comparable with our English realist films. Then there is Ivens' film *The Spanish Earth*, Paul Strand's *The Wave*, and *The Heart of Spain*. But the movement is not as yet large and its makers have not, except for Lorentz, gone deeply into the use of the film for education in citizenship and for public relations. The second answer is that Hollywood has kept in much closer touch with real life than have the British story-film makers. In a film like *Intolerance*, Griffith dealt with the vitally important problem of labor. In *The Covered Wagon* there was the conquest of the West, a theme close to reality. In many American story-films you have backgrounds of air services, big industries, newspapers, radio stations, railroads and public services. You in America have incorporated certain aspects of real life into your story films in a way which the English have not done. You have made films like *Fury*, and *They Won't Forget*, *Dead End* and *Black Legion*, which dealt with current sociological problems. The first cycle of gangster films came close to a true portrayal of one aspect of American life; so close that objections were raised by those who did not like facing facts.

But Hollywood's main job is to present entertainment whereas the documentary film seeks to combine information with dramatic technique. Hollywood may borrow documentary methods but the true documentary film has different ends to serve from those of Hollywood. There is every need for a strong documentary film movement in America and I can see no reason why it should not happen.

Finally, I want to make one last point. I have used the phrase *the documentary method* because, as an adjective, *documentary* is not only applied to describe a particular type of film making. The documentary method is found in news reporting, in magazines, in the theatre. It is the

\* Reviewed on page 11.



dramatization of facts in any medium. By these means, particularly in radio and films, we are using the documentary method to try and bring a closer link between the ordinary person and the world in which he lives. We are trying to create on the screen a world of living realities in terms of human experience. And, in the long run, realism must depend on the presentation of real life by a creative and dramatic technique.

## Book Reviews

### Footnotes to the Film

Edited by CHARLES DAVY

THIS is a fresh and exhilarating book, written mostly by English workers or critics of the motion picture, and much more alert and suggestive about present-day movies than anything else that comes to mind for the American reader. Charles Davy has planned it carefully and comprehensively, and enlisted some seventeen specialists to cover different departments of his general subject. As good a way as any to indicate its contents is to list the writers and their topics, and the best comment on the book as a whole is to say that it should be required reading for anyone with an intelligent interest in motion pictures beyond the mere habit of seeing them for a pastime.

The book has four main divisions: "Studio Work—How a Film Is Made"; "Screen Material—Help from Other Arts"; "Film Industry Problems"; and "Films and the Public". Under the first heading Alfred Hitchcock, the director of such admirable films as *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* and *The Woman Alone*, writes about Direction. Robert Donat, remembered for his performances in *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* and *The Ghost Goes West*, writes about Film Acting. Basil Wright, who directed and photographed *The Song of Ceylon*, writes about Handling the Camera. Under the second heading Graham Greene, film critic of "The Spectator," writes about Subjects and Stories; Alberto Cavalcanti, a leader among the *avant-*

*garde* movement in France and the maker of *En Rade* and *Rien que les Heures*, about Comedies and Cartoons; John Betjeman, a film critic and an authority on architecture, about Settings, Costumes, Backgrounds; Maurice Jaubert, composer of the scores for two Rene Clair films and collaborator with Honneger on the music for *Mayerling*, about Music on the Screen; and Paul Nash, a distinguished artist and writer on art, about The Colour Film. Under the third heading John Grierson, critic and leader among the makers of documentary films, writes about The Course of Realism; Alexander Korda, director of such films as *The Private Life of Henry VIII* and *Rembrandt*, about British Films: Today and Tomorrow; Bail Dean, celebrated stage director who has made such films as *The Constant Nymph*, about The Future of Screen and Stage; and Maurice Kann, editor of New York's Motion Picture Daily, about Hollywood and Britain—Three Thousand Miles Apart. Under the fourth heading Elizabeth Bowen, the novelist, writes about Why I Go to the Cinema; Sidney L. Bernstein, in charge of a big chain of English movie theatres, about theatre management; Alistair Cooke, film critic and at present a radio commentator in this country, about The Critic in Film History; Forsyth Hardy, of the Scottish Film Council, about Censorship and Film Societies; R. S. Lambert, one of the members representing educational interests on Governing Council of British Film Institute, about The Film in Education; and Charles Davy, film critic of "The London Mercury," winds up with Conclusion: Are Films Worth While?

The book is well illustrated and indexed.

J. S. H.

Published by Oxford University Press, N. Y., 1937—\$4.50.

### Talking Pictures

By BARRETT C. KIESLING

THIS book is an excellent popular exposition of its subtitle: "How they are made—how to appreciate them." "Appreciate", in this sense, has little to do with that word so prevalent in study clubs and forums, "appreciation" with implications of delving into esthetic values. It

means simply understanding the nature of talking pictures, and their special qualities and effectiveness, through familiarity with how they are made.

There is nothing arty about this book. It is practical, interesting, even entertaining; written by a man closely acquainted with his subject, and able to make a good book out of what he knows. There is a noticeable flavor of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer about it, but that is not a defect in a book that intends to explain how the industry functions at its most efficient. Beginning with a brief but adequate summary of how movies came into being, it goes into the studio and tells how and why all the things are done that turn an idea for a story into a picture that goes out upon the screens of the whole world. That accomplished, it touches sensibly on the social influences of movies, on movies in the home and school, and on what lies ahead on the road the movies have opened up. At the end is a very good glossary, and scattered liberally through the book are unusual pictures of studio people—the technicians—at work.

There have been numberless books purporting to do what this book does, but so far as this reviewer's knowledge goes, this book of Mr. Kiesling's is immeasurably the best.

J. S. H.

*Published by Johnson Publishing Company.*  
—\$1.40.

### The Movies Come from America

By GILBERT SELDES

GILBERT SELDES has been writing about the movies for years, keeping up with them industriously and making his lively comments through various organs that must have reached a great number of people. This book shows indications of having been compiled for England, where—at least recently—book-bound thoughts about the motion picture have been of weightier calibre, in content if not in style. People familiar with Mr. Seldes' ideas and feelings about the cinema will not find much that is strikingly new in this volume, but they will find it pleasantly readable, and that it manages to cover a good deal of

ground. Not as deep as a well: more like a cheerful brooklet. And it contains an extraordinarily good collection of illustrations, many of them not to be found anywhere else. They range from the earliest to the latest stills, chosen with happy discrimination and a flair for significant as well as entertaining qualities. They make the book almost priceless for those who like to refresh themselves at will with visible mementoes of things on the screen that have given them pleasure.

J. S. H.

*Published by Charles Scribner's Sons, N. Y.—*  
\$3.00.

### What Shall We Read About Movies?

THIS question is answered in a listing of nearly one hundred books and periodicals, prepared by William Lewin, Chairman of the Motion Picture Committee of the Department of Secondary Education of the National Education Association. This list furnishes a helpful guide to those Council and Club groups who wish to read about the motion picture and who wish source material in writing about the motion picture. It is in mimeographed pamphlet form and can be secured from Educational and Recreational Guides, Inc., 138 Washington Street, Newark, N. J.

### Selected Book-Films

IF you have not received a copy of the 1937 Selected Book-Films why not get it now? It is interesting for year-round book-film activity as well as for Book Week. The price is 10c.

### The Board's Annual Conference

THE Annual Conference of the National Board of Review will be held in New York City on next January 20th-22nd, at the Hotel Pennsylvania. All day and evening sessions will fill the first two days, Thursday and Friday, with a morning session on Saturday and the final event, the twenty-third Annual Luncheon on Saturday.

We ask our readers to plan to come and to send us now suggestions for consideration, as we wish to provide a program helpful and interesting in response to need.



# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS

## DEPARTMENT

*This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of Exceptional and Honorable*

*Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.*

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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## The River

*Written and directed by Pare Lorentz, photographed by Stacy Woodward, Floyd Crosby and Willard Van Dyke, music composed by Virgil Thompson, conducted by Alexander Smallens. Narration spoken by Thomas Chalmers. Produced by the Farm Security Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture.*

A couple of years or so ago the Resettlement Administration made a film called *The Plow That Broke the Plain*—an interesting, useful and beautiful film that had the ill-chance to come along during a campaign season, thus running into the prejudiced accusation of being New Deal propaganda, which worked up a certain amount of antagonism to having it shown. It also ran up against a theory—never proved—that people do not like informative three-reelers. Nevertheless the film gradually made its way into some thousands of commercial theatres and as many halls, schools, and other uncommercial places of exhibition. It is still very much alive, with more demands for it than its distributors can satisfy.

*The River* is a companion piece to it. It is a documentary film—and Paul Rotha's article on another page of this magazine will enlighten those who do not know what a documentary film is. As *The Plow* told about the land and the dust storms, *The River* tells about the water and the floods. The third part of a natural trilogy would be about the people.

"Tells about" is not the right word—this picture *shows*. It shows to the eye, with sound to elucidate, color and reinforce. Natural sound that comes from the picture

itself, musical sound from Virgil Thompson's varied and racy score, word sounds from what is certainly as fine a narrative accompaniment as a picture could have.

The picture has nine sequences, building one out of another to present "a record of the Mississippi; Where it comes from, Where it goes; What it has meant to us And what it has cost us." The first shows that mighty conflux of waters that drop from the eastern and western hills to flow through the Great Valley to the Gulf. The second traces the river commerce from 1811 to 1865 (it is a constant temptation to quote from the narrator's words) "Corn and oats, Down the Missouri, Tobacco and whiskey, Down the Ohio; Down from Pittsburgh Down from St. Louis. Hemp and potatoes; Pork and flour; We sent our commerce to the sea. And we made cotton king—" Then the third—"And we fought a war—" and the double tragedy of it, the tragedy of land twice impoverished. But (sequence four) there was lumber in the North, and coal in the hills. From 1865 to 1910 mines were worked and timber cleared, and a new continent built. From 1910 to 1919 (sequence five) we had built a hundred cities, but at what a cost! "For the water comes downhill, Spring and fall, down from the cut-over mountains—down from the plowed-off slopes." Floods, devastation, and a hundred thousand men fighting the old river. Sequence six: 1937—the extent of the devastation—four hundred million tons of our most valuable natural resource have been washed into the Gulf of Mexico every year, and the land has become poor. "And poor land (sequence



From Pare Lorentz' new film "The River"

seven and eight) makes poor people—Poor people make poor land. . . . And a generation growing up with no new land in the West—No new continent to build. . . . *Ill-clad; Ill-housed; Ill-fed*—And in the greatest river valley in the world." Now the problem has been presented. What is the answer? The one great answer that has been attempted is shown in the last sequence, the dams and all that go with them in the Tennessee Valley.

Taken as a picture, a poem, a symphony, or a stern lesson in reality, this film is remarkable. Crammed as it is with meaning, it is a joy to look at and listen to without regard to meaning. The succession of lovely and eloquent images (for the photography is superb) accompanied by the succession of indigenous tunes and—even more powerfully—of lovely, evocative American names is something unique in sound motion pictures. Pare Lorentz, who did such a good job with *The Plow That Broke the Plain*, has done a much better job here. And that it was a job—work done for a useful purpose—doesn't make it any less the creation of an artist, who has learned

how to use the tools of the modern movie in masterly fashion. Among the films of actuality that we are acquainted with, one has to go to the best work of Joris Ivens for anything to compare it with, and Ivens has not done anything with the expanse of *The River*. For here is the land of America and the spirit of America—that young, eager, careless, greedy spirit, ravaging the land to build a nation, and the land turning on its ravagers. A conflict between man and nature that must come to an end before both are ruined.

*Rated Exceptional.*

J. S. H.

## Stage Door

*Adapted from the play by George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber by Morrie Ryskind and Anthony Veiller, directed by Gregory LaCava, photographed by Robert de Grasse. Musical director, Roy Webb, art director, Van Nest Polglase. Produced by Pandro S. Berman for RKO-Radio, distributed by RKO-Radio.*

### *The cast*

Terry Randall	..... Katharine Hepburn
Joan Maitland	..... Ginger Rogers
Anthony Powell	..... Adolphe Menjou
Linda Shaw	..... Gail Patrick



Catherine Luther ..... Constance Collier  
 Kay Hamilton ..... Andrea Leeds  
 Henry Sims ..... Samuel S. Hinds  
 Judith Canfield ..... Lucille Ball  
 Harcourt ..... Franklin Pangborn  
 Bill ..... William Corson  
 Richard Carmichael ..... Pierre Watkin  
 Butch ..... Grady Sutton  
 Stage Director ..... Frank Reicher  
 Hattie ..... Phyllis Kennedy  
 Eve ..... Eve Arden  
 Annie ..... Ann Miller  
 Mary Lou ..... Margaret Early  
 Dizzy ..... Jean Rouverol  
 Cast of stage play—Katherine Alexander, Ralph  
 Forbes, Mary Forbes, Huntley Gordon.

**S**TAGE DOOR is exceptional—in the sense of being unusual—in one way that people hardly notice: it hasn't the remotest suggestion of the boy-meets-girl theme. It is entirely girl-meets-career, girl-loses-career, and girl-gets-career. And the girl is really several girls, more of whom lose than get. The popularity of the picture seems to indicate that the romance of success can be made as attractive and exciting as the romance of love.

Of course there is something much more than the bare success idea that is responsible for the extraordinary appeal the film has: principally a warm human interest created by good writing, good directing and good acting in a group of people connected with that still glamorous institution, the stage. And if there is anything about the stage more fascinating than the people already established there it is the way of becoming established there—the just-outside-the-threshold region where almost everyone has some time or other day-dreamed of being, close within hearing of the call that may mean actually entering into the fabulous foot-light land. *Stage Door*, as a title, symbolizes the entrance to the fulfillment of one of the minor passions of life, that curious yearning of the ego to strut its moment before an audience in a grand atmosphere of make-believe. It is a yearning of the youthful, or of those who in a certain way never grow up, and many people outgrow it, as small boys outgrow their dreams of being Buffalo Bills or Lindberghs, but it is universal enough to provide a vast audience of remembering sympathizers for such a film as this.

Granted that for purposes of family consumption everything morally shocking has

been carefully side-stepped in this picture, and that almost an air of Louisa May Alcott and her sheltered little women hovers over it, the picture still does live, in the immensely satisfying way of commanding laughter and tears—complete sympathy, in short—like a piece of craftily presented real life. Its group of women, most of them young, some of them not, who live in the theatrical boarding-house waiting for their “chance”, is diversified enough to cover a fair range of individuality and character, and for so large a group its members stand out surprisingly as rememberable persons. It may be a little doubtful if so many witty talkers ever flourished in such a crowd of novices, but it is a privilege if not a duty of fiction to brighten and point up its dialogue, and only an awful grouch would complain of being so effectively entertained.

The plot concerns the efforts of these girls and women to get jobs on the stage, and particularly the efforts of two of them to get the leading part in a certain play. One of them, with a last-year's hit to recommend her, fails, and commits suicide, and the other, a stage-struck rich girl, succeeds, through a manipulation of financial backing of which she is personally ignorant, and which she would not have taken advantage of if she had known about it. There are these rivalries for jobs, and also (played for comedy) rivalries for the off-stage attentions of a prominent producer. It all rounds out to a complete circle of the play going on—the play must always go on—with tragedy and heart-ache receding into the dimly-remembered, and a new girl arriving to start another circle.

*Stage Door* is likely to be a minor milestone something in the fashion of *The Birth of a Nation*, as a picture in which many talents first came to attention. Several girls who have never been much heard of before will have chances to be heard again because they made themselves noticed in small but vivid parts in this film: Lucille Ball, as the girl who finally retreated to domesticity as the wife of a lumberman, Eve Arden as the blonde with the white cat, Phyllis Kennedy as the also-serving maid, Ann Miller as Ginger Rogers' light-footed, worldly-wise dancing partner. Andrea Leeds, par-

ticularly, for her carefully subdued but penetrating performance of the girl who gave up the struggle. Most particularly of all, Ginger Rogers, triumphantly making use of a full-fledged opportunity to show what she has often indicated before, that she is much more than the lucky team-mate of Fred Astaire, a brilliant and individual comedian, with a capacity for feeling of no small order. Katharine Hepburn is already established, but here, merging herself almost self-effacingly into a group, she creates a character with more stature and depth to it than anything else she has ever done. Moving in their assigned orbits are a lot of expert players—Adolphe Menjou as a cautiously diabolical play-producer, Franklin Pangborn as his harassed factotum, Grady Sutton as the amiable butcher's-boy, William Corson, as Ginger Rogers' understanding boy-friend, Gail Patrick as a haughty fur-wearer. And long to be remembered is the implicit tragedy

of Constance Collier's faded old trouper, far less obvious than the theatrical suicide of Andrea Leeds with her voices and orchestral accompaniment, but far more subtly poignant—a fine portrayal, with eloquent lights and shades, of an old-time actress who with all her pathetic silliness somehow does manage to uphold the dignity of her profession.

*Stage Door*, as people are continually pointing out, is a marvelously clever turning of the joke upon George Kaufman and Edna Ferber, who wrote an adroit but peevish play to ridicule and excoriate Hollywood. Hollywood took their play's title, a lot of its characters and some of its plot, and amiably threw away its chief point, one of the quietest and most complete rebuttals possible. A successful rebuttal because Hollywood's picture makes Broadway's play look like pretty small chaff.

*Rated Exceptional.*

J. S. H.

## Conquest

*Dramatized by Helene Jerome from a book by Wladaw Gasiorowski, screen play by Samuel Hoffenstein, Salka Viertel and S. N. Behrman, directed by Clarence Brown, photographed by Karl Freund. Musical score by Herbert Stothart, art director Cedric Gibbons. Produced by Bernard H. Hyman for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, distributed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.*

### The cast

Marie Walewska .....	Greta Garbo
Napoleon .....	Charles Boyer
Talleyrand .....	Reginald Owen
Captain D'Ornano .....	Alan Marshal
Count Walewski .....	Henry Stephenson
Paul Lachinski .....	Leif Erikson
Laetitia Bonaparte .....	Dame May Whitty
Prince Poniatowski .....	C. Henry Gordon
Countess Pelagia .....	Maria Ouspenskaya
Stephan .....	Claude Gillingwater
Marshal Duroc .....	George Houston
Senator Malachowski .....	George Zucco
Roustan .....	Noble Johnson
Constantin .....	George Givot
Alexandre .....	Scotty Beckett
Senator Wybitecki .....	Henry Kolker
Staps .....	Roland Varno
Dying Soldier .....	Vladimir Sokoloff

THIS picture, while it was being made, was called *Marie Walewska*. It is easy to see why that title was dropped, since it would suggest little to anyone unacquainted with the little known figures of history, and why, as while the picture grew

in production the dominance of the figure of Napoleon emerged, a title connoting something more Napoleonic was substituted. For the story is essentially a story of Napoleon, though not his whole story, only that part of it which concerned a Polish Countess with whom he fell in love, and who became the mother of one of his sons.

If one has a set idea of Napoleon in mind (and who has not?) it is a little hard to adjust one's self to this, and not say "Why, Napoleon was not like that! They have distorted history to make a sympathetic hero for the movies!" A little unbiased thought, however, will discover this: that only in brief glimpses—the plotting with Talleyrand for an alliance through marriage with one of the old European dynasties, his wedding with the Austrian Marie Louise, the presentation of his son to the army, his retreat from Moscow—do we ever see him except as he appeared to Marie Walewska. She, an ardent young patriot in Poland, first heard of him as the hope of her country, the man who would restore the Polish nation from its bondage to Russia. She could not know—nor does the picture tell us—that his coming to Warsaw was part of a great plan for uniting all Europe against England, in which



the final effective step would be the defeat and then control of Russia, through a conflict initiated by engineering a revolt in Poland. She idealized him as the saviour of her country. Then came disillusionment, when he had seen her and been attracted by her and paid court to her in a fashion that insulted her sense of dignity and honor. But when her husband's patriotic friends urged her to plead with the Emperor for the sake of her country, she gave in and went to him. This disgraced her with her husband, and made her feel like a conquered slave. But her first idealizing could be awakened again, when he told her of his dream of a United States of Europe. That dream was one of his life's dreams, though the motives of it vacillated from the most beneficently ideal to the most practically tyrannical, and being a sort of mystic, with a mystic's eloquence in voicing a mood, he could convince her of his sincerity, restore her belief and win her love. Her love, once given, was permanent and selfless. She gave him a ring (which the picture makes no mention of) with the words: "If you cease to love me, forget not that I love you." From then on she was devoted to him, as his mother was devoted, content with loving and asking only that he should remember her when he needed her. She had happy brief years with him in France, in the intervals when he was home from his wars, and went out of his life when he married the Austrian princess and so adored his new wife for the heir she gave him. When he was sent to Elba, and everyone but his mother had deserted him, she went to him there. He was no longer her romantic lover, but her loving friend, who appreciated her devotion, and saw wistfully that her son—his one son born of a real love and the only son of his that was to grow up into a distinguished man — might have been the worthy heir of all his dreams.

So history has been fictionized, in details of incident, only in Napoleon's use of Marie to carry a message from Elba to prepare for his return to France, and in the farewell before he embarks on the Bellerophon for his last exile. Napoleon's character, if it can be called fictionizing, has been fictionized

to the extent of showing him as he appeared to a woman who loved him.

So *Conquest* is primarily a love story, in an historical setting. It is produced with lavish handsomeness—so lavish that some of it becomes almost stuffy. It gets theatrical, in the meretricious sense, at times—Napoleon's shadow over the map of Europe, the dying soldier in the Russian snow, Marie's brother, the falling of the pencil on the name of Waterloo. It is theatrical with fine dramatic effect in such scenes as Marie's confronting of the portraits of the Hapsburgs, and in the thunderstorm that punctuates Napoleon's tirade of resolve to go back and reconquer Europe. It is always dramatic and moving and real when the two principal actors are on the scene. Charles Boyer is the one player one can think of as doing Napoleon so effectively—back of his portrayal is an obviously careful study of the character, and in make-up, voice, manner, he makes his portrait vivid and believably alive. Being so effective it is inevitable that he should dominate the picture, but Garbo's being a foil to him does not lessen the quieter truthfulness of her Marie. It proves—if such proof were needed—her rare integrity as an artist, that she should subdue her strength of personality to the demands of the part she is playing. And she is not overshadowed.

The lesser parts fit in as they were meant to do, but those one remembers most admiringly are the sly Talleyrand of Reginald Owen, the devoted soldiers of George Houston and Alan Marshall, and particularly the mad old Polish Countess of Maria Ouspenskaya and the Laetitia Bonaparte of Dame May Whitty.

J. S. H.

*Rated Honorable Mention.*

## Mayerling

*Adapted by Joseph Kessel and J. C. Cube from Claude Anet's novel "Idyl's End," directed by Anatole Litvak, photographed by Thiraud, music by Arthur Honneger. Produced by Nero Film, distributed by Pax Films, Inc.*

### *The cast*

Archduke Rudolph of Austria	Charles Boyer
Baroness Marie Vetsera	Danielle Darrieux
Countess Larisch	Suzy Prim
Emperor Franz Joseph	Jean Dax
Empress Elizabeth	Gabrielle Dorziat
Count Taaffe	Debucourt

Baroness Helene Vetsera ..... Marthe Regnier  
 Chief of police ..... Vladimir Sokoloff  
 Loschek ..... Andre Dubosc

ONE realizes, soon after *Mayerling* begins, that it is in the right hands. The hands never falter; the film continues its assured and even-tempoed pace, and the spectator relaxes with the conviction that he won't be let down. He isn't. In no item of production is the film defective: cast, dialogue, cutting, photography, sets, and so on down the line—all fit together. Such control of production is uncommon, it is not often possible under the complicated and impersonal set-up of Hollywood producing companies. Under the peculiar circumstances of the French film "industry," which lacks quantity and opulence, quality isn't compromised half so much.

The unity of treatment and style which at once distinguish *Mayerling* are obviously the result of close, personal supervision from script to cutting. Another word for supervision in this case (unfortunately it is not true for many other films) is direction. *Mayerling*, in short, seems to have had a good director. In film-making the importance of the director is elementary, but in these days of "creative" producers he is being relegated more and more to the role of stage-manager. The present Hollywood career of Anatole Litvak, director of *Mayerling*, is not altogether irrelevant. His present employers should watch how skillfully he tells the story of Archduke Rudolph and the Baroness Vetsera, if they feel that no director is competent enough not to be supervised.

Archduke Rudolph was the heir to the throne of Austria. As interpreted by Charles Boyer he is a suppressed and passionate fellow; hounded by the Emperor, his father's spies, denied the companionship of his fellow-students and forced into a marriage he loathes. He reacts by plunging into feverish debauchery, until he meets Marie Vetsera. For her he ends his father's rule over their life by shooting the Baroness and himself at Mayerling.

The success of the film lies in its manner, not its matter. There have been many recog-

nition-scenes, such as the one at the ballet where Danielle Darrieux as Marie Vetsera becomes aware that the prince in the royal box is the young man of yesterday's carnival—but none quite as filmic as this. The dream-like quality of the revelation is emphasized by the floating figures of the dancers, the remoteness of the audience and the companions, and the girl's enchantment. And scarcely twenty words are spoken in a scene which speaks volumes. Yet it is no more successful than any other—the presentation at court, the meeting of the Empress-mother and Marie, the Archduke's wild parties, the parting of Marie and her mother, Suzy Prim's whispered messages over a piano, Marie's first visit to Rudolph. All partake of the quality of enchantment which the whole film creates. One gratuitous help which the film receives by accident of origin is that of language; the speech is almost a musical accompaniment.

It is a comment on Miss Darrieux's acting to remember more scenes involving her than anyone else; her American debut is certainly promising. This in no way detracts from Boyer's brilliant performance as the tempestuous Rudolph which, it suffices to say, is a finished job. Suzy Prim as a comic Countess Larisch, Jean Dax as the glazed-eyed Emperor, Marthe Regnier as the conventional and unsuspecting mother, Debucourt as the implacable spy-director, Vladimir Sokoloff as the cringing chief of police, Andre Dubosc as the world-weary valet, and Gabrielle Dorziat as the sympathetic Empress-mother round out a cast which can literally be termed completely excellent.

Rated Honorable Mention.

R. G.

## Victoria the Great

Written by Miles Malleon and Charles de Grandcourt, produced and directed by Herbert Wilcox. Photographed by F. A. Young, musical score by Anthony Collins, art director L. P. Williams, Distributed by RKO-Radio.

### The cast

Queen Victoria ..... Anna Neagle  
 Prince Consort ..... Anton Walbrook  
 Prince Earnest ..... Walter Rilla  
 Duchess of Kent ..... Mary Morris  
 Lord Melbourne ..... H. B. Warner  
 Baroness Lehzen ..... Greta Wegener



Archbishop of Canterbury.....	C. V. France
Wellington .....	James Dale
Sir Robert Peel .....	Charles Carson
Lord Conyngham .....	Hubert Harben
Palmerston .....	Felix Aylmer
Disraeli as a young man.....	Derrick De Marney
Disraeli as an old man.....	Hugh Miller
Gladstone .....	Arthur Young
Stockmar .....	Paul Leyssac
President Lincoln .....	Percy Parsons

IN Montreal, searching for divertisement, I caught sight of His Majesty's Theatre. *Victoria the Great* was being road shown. I went in. The theatre is itself a Victorian affair, all gilt and red plush. It's the sort of place that you feel couldn't have been named for George VI, or even George V. Probably it was already up when Edward VII., then Prince of Wales, toured the Dominions during Victoria's jubilee year, representing the Crown. On the right a box was reserved under the British flag, presumably for royalty. Before the film started the audience rose solemnly for "God Save the King." Then they sat down and for two hours looked at the queen.

As I looked with them, I didn't have so much a sense of the power of empire as the power of the cinema. It seemed to me one of the major, if posthumous, triumphs of Victoria that she has escaped in this year of grace from the narrow confines of the proscenium arch into the great open spaces of the motion picture. The screen has made her less stuffy than she is usually supposed to be.

Herbert Wilcox, producer and director of so many period pictures, knew better than to buy and photograph Laurence Housman's "Victoria Regina," either in the abridged version that reached the American stage or in the thirty scenes of the author's original script. He went to source material, and the result seems to justify the belief that, so far as biography and history are concerned, the screen medium takes precedence over the stage. In comparison with the film, Mr. Housman's play, for all its competent writing, is scarcely more than a thumbnail sketch. On the screen the portrait of Victoria emerges fuller, dimensional, more life like.

It is less episodic. It has continuity and flow. We see events in the piece, with cause and effect, actually happening instead of

being reported in wordy dialogue. The attempt on the life of the queen, for instance, is not a conversation piece about something that has happened somewhere else. We see the mob. We understand the social unrest caused by famine and the unpopular Corn Laws. We hear the agitator in the Park voicing grievances. The crowd is dispersed by the bobbies, or peelers, both terms stemming from Robert Peel. We realize the momentary madness that impels the man to draw his gun. We get into the House of Commons. We listen to the speeches and witness, with Albert, the reaction to them. We get an impression of conflicting policies, of the character of Victoria's advisers, of Melbourne and Peel and Palmerston, of Gladstone and Disraeli.

It is true the picture, having given us so much, makes us want more, more of the warp and woof of the reign, of the Boxer uprising, of the Boer War, of "Chinese" Gordon, of the troubles in Ireland and the agitation for Home Rule. The emphasis admittedly is on the personal life of the queen, or narrowed still further to her personal feeling for Albert. Her relationships with her mother, her children, and her grandchildren are pretty well crowded out. Even so. The personal life of a queen cannot exist in space. There must be a background against which to project it. And Victoria is interesting as a wife because of the complication of her being also a sovereign.

Anna Neagle's portrayal is not on the dullish side. With her as Victoria no reasons of state are necessary to hold Prince Albert in England. Their idyl has a freshness, a ring of truth, lacking in the too highly polished, chromium plated *Conquest*. And nothing in Anton Walbrook's earlier appearance on our screen as Michael Strogoff prepares us for the excellence of his Prince Consort.

The director makes the camera serve the story. One of the most interesting shots is of the hall in Windsor Castle when Victoria comes out of Albert's room after his death. It is a long shot and Victoria goes down the hall, away from the camera, effectively suggesting the retirement of the Widow of Windsor. Later, after the ten

years' time lapse has been established, Victoria comes along the same hall. But this time she is walking toward the camera, the implication being that she is emerging once more into public life.

One unfortunate sequence in the picture is that done in Technicolor. Not only is the artistic integrity of the film spoiled by the sudden intrusion of color into a black and white medium; the color photography itself is faulty. The director may have felt that only color would give the necessary brilliance to the military display that marked Victoria's jubilee, but as it happens the earlier montage shots in black and white that he used for the coronation are far more striking.

On the whole the film has made a commendable attempt to re-create a period. Compared with such stage plays as the first "Disraeli" and the current "Young Mr. Disraeli" and "Parnell" and "Gladstone" and "Victoria Regina" which are necessarily selective, putting only a few facets and phases of the reign under the microscope, of dramatic treatment, the picture is positively documentary. In its own right as cinema, away from any comparison with plays written under the limitations of the theatre, it might have been even more documentary. Nevertheless, *Victoria the Great* stands as the best treatment of the epoch that has as yet been made.

*Rated Honorable Mention.* F. T. P.

## Selected Pictures Guide

(Continued from page 2)

- m** *EBB TIDE*—Oscar Homolka, Ray Milland, Barry Fitzgerald, Frances Farmer. Story by Robert Louis Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne. Directed by James Hogan. The adventures of three men trying to escape from the South Sea island where they have become stranded beach-combers. Unusual characterizations distinguish this film, with good dialogue, and some Technicolor of fine quality. Recommended for schools and libraries, for cultural and instructional values. Paramount.
- m** *FEDERAL BULLETS*—Zeffie Tilbury, Milbrun Stone, Terry Walker. Novel by Major George Fielding Eliot. Directed by Karl Brown. A G-men picture, with exciting action and noise, and a novelty in the shape of an old lady who runs rackets under the screen of impressive charitable activities. Monogram.
- f** *GREAT GARRICK, THE*—Brian Aherne, Olivia de Havilland, Edward Everett Horton. Screenplay by Ernest Vajda. Directed by James Whale. A polite comedy, in which the great 18th century English actor has a surprising adventure on his way to play at the Comedie Francaise in Paris. The whole thing is essentially a huge practical joke of an amusing kind, handled picturesquely. Warner.
- fj** *\*HEIDI*—Shirley Temple, Jean Hersholt, Marcia Mae Jones. Novel by Johanna Spyri. Directed by Allan Dwan. A warm-hearted attractive adaptation of the famous children's classic. About the little girl who lived with her grandfather in an Alpine village and her unwilling visit to the city that turned out so happily. One of the best Shirley Temple pictures, letting her be a natural human child instead of just a clever performer. 20th Century-Fox.
- f** *IT'S LOVE I'M AFTER*—Leslie Howard, Bette Davis, Olivia de Havilland. Screenplay by Maurice Hanline. Directed by Archie L. Mayo. A pleasant comedy about two actors, one of them a matinee idol with whom a young girl has fallen in love. The plot concerns his efforts to cure her of her infatuation. Brightly written and acted. Warner.
- f** *LANCER SPY*—George Sanders, Dolores Del Rio, Peter Lorre. Novel by Marthe McKenna. Directed by Gregory Ratoff. A story of a spy in the Great War—an Englishman who successfully impersonated a German officer. The careful management of details gives this an unusual interest for tales of the kind, and the new star, George Sanders, does a fine characterization. 20th Century-Fox.
- m** *LIVE, LOVE AND LEARN*—Robert Montgomery, Rosalind Russell, Robert Benchley, Helen Vinson. Screenplay by Marion Parsonet. Directed by George Fitzmaurice. A comedy of New York's artist Bohemia, with serious undercurrents about a young painter who became the fashion, and what it did to his painting. Bright and entertaining, with a full-length character part for Robert Benchley. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f** *LOVE IS ON THE AIR*—Ronald Reagan, June Travis. Story by Roy Chanslor. Directed by Nick Grinde. The misleading title of a lively and amusing tale in which a radio news commentator goes out after racketeers and a murderer. His demotion to the kiddies' hour is a part of the plot with entertainment of its own. First National.
- m** *MADAME X*—Gladys George, Warren William, John Beal. Play by Alexandre Bisson. Directed by Sam Wood. This play, for so many years a favorite vehicle for emotional actresses, about a mother whose mis-step sent her practically to the gutter but who made a great sacrifice for her



son, has been done with the finest attention to details and general effectiveness, and with a remarkably solid and moving performance by Gladys George. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

m \*MAYERLING—See Exceptional Photoplays Department, page 15.

m NIGHT CLUB SCANDAL—John Barrymore, Lynne Overman. Play by Daniel N. Rubin. Directed by Dudley Murphy. A murder story not particularly interesting but played by a good cast. Comedy is supplied by Lynne Overman as a nose newspaper reporter. Paramount.

f NON-STOP NEW YORK—Anna Lee, John Loder, Francis Sullivan, Frank Cellier. Novel "Sky Steward" by Ken Attiwill. Directed by Robert Stevenson. British production. Blackmail, murder, comedy and romance on a transatlantic plane, all skillfully blended in a smoothly told story. A young girl, only witness of a murder, tries to save an innocent man from the electric chair with the real murderer on her trail. Gaumont British.

f OVER THE GOAL—William Hopper, June Travis, Johnnie Davis. Screenplay by William Jacobs. Directed by Noel M. Smith. The old football formula of the home team winning in the last few minutes of play spiced up with some comedy and thrills. First National.

f \*PERFECT SPECIMEN, THE—Errol Flynn, Joan Blondell. Story by Samuel Hopkins Adams. Directed by Michael Curtiz. The rollicking tale of a young millionaire escaping from the cooped-up existence his tyrannical grandmother had forced on him. Hugh Herbert, E. E. Horton and Allan Jenkins help contribute plenty of humorous interest of the popular brand. First National.

fj ROLL ALONG, COWBOY — Smith Bellew, Cecilia Parker. Novel "The Dude Rancher" by Zane Grey. Directed by Gus Meins. A pleasant Westerner, not new in plot but unusually well handled without the obvious touches. Smith Bellew sings several songs, and sings them well. 20th Century-Fox.

fj TEXAS TRAIL — William Boyd, Russell Hayden, Judith Allen, Billy King. Story "Tex" by Clarence E. Mulford. Directed by David Selman. Hopalong Cassidy and his volunteer troop commissioned to round up wild horses for the army run into heavy opposition. A good Western with unusually beautiful photography. Paramount.

fj THUNDER TRAIL — Gilbert Roland, Chas. Bickford, Marsha Hunt. Novel: "Arizona Ames" by Zane Grey. Directed by Charles Barton. A tale of the old adventurous days of the West, and of two brothers, one brought up by the murderers of their father, the other by a kindly

Mexican prospector. A very nicely produced Western and exciting entertainment. Paramount.

f WALLABY JIM OF THE ISLANDS—George Houston, Ruth Coleman, Douglas Walton. Story by Albert Richard Wetjin. Directed by Charles Lamont. A likeable hero who bursts occasionally into pleasant song, and an exciting story of pearl fishing in the South Seas make an entertaining film. Nice comedy, especially by an amusing monkey. Grand National.

f YIDDLE WITH HIS FIDDLE—Molly Picon. Screenplay by Joseph Green. Directed by Joseph Green and Jan Nowina-Przbylski. A Yiddish film with English subtitles, about a girl traveling with a quartet of wandering musicians disguised as a boy—the troubles of love, and her eventual success as an actress. Interesting for a folkish quality and for its racial characteristics. Sphinx.

## SHORT SUBJECTS

### INFORMATIONAL

- f CHILI, LAND OF CHARM—Fitzpatrick Traveltalk in excellent color. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj \*EQUESTRIAN ACROBATICS—A Pete Smith specialty, presenting the Christiana family, an astonishing group of circus riders whose stunts are literally amazing. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj FILMING MODERN YOUTH—One of the adventures of a Cameraman—showing youngsters in astonishing sports and feats of skill. 20th Century-Fox.
- fj FUTURE STARS—The present-day way of training children in athletics and sports from infancy. Columbia.
- fj \*GLIMPSES OF PERU—A Fitzpatrick Traveltalk, beautifully photographed in color and entirely interesting. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj GOING PLACES NO. 39—Devoted to ping-pong, with stars playing, often with slow motion. Universal.
- f I DALABYGD (In Dalecaria, Sweden)—Covers rural customs and particularly handicrafts interestingly. Swedish production. Scandinavian.
- f IT'S WORK—A Newman Travelogue—pottery, Ceylon tea, watches, wood carving. Vitaphone.
- f LONG BRIGHT LAND, THE—A Newman Travelogue in color of New Zealand and its Maori natives. Vitaphone.
- f \*MARCH OF TIME NO. 2 (4th Series)—A very good issue, covering the demand for old junk by the steel industry for their war orders; the strange working of some of the Defence of the Realm Acts of the war still in force in England; and a vivid section of LaGuardia in action as mayor of New York. RKO-Radio.
- fj MARCH OF TIME NO. 3 (4th Series)—Covers the U. S. Secret Service, Amsteag, and the growing crisis in Algeria. RKO-Radio.
- f PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 3—Modern Czechoslovakia; Robert C. Bruce photography of the South west; a fashion turn of Broadway night clubs. Paramount.
- f \*PIGSKIN CHAMPIONS—A Pete Smith specialty, giving remarkable visual analyses of the professional football tactics followed by the Green Bay Packers. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f PICK YOUR FAVORITE—Grantland Rice Sportlight—many kinds of recreation to be taken either in solitude or with the multitude. Paramount.
- f RAINBOW PASS, THE—A delightful bit about China and its theatre. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f ROPING 'EM ALIVE—Catching baby elephants and pythons in Africa. Vitaphone.
- fj TROTTER THOROUGHBREDS—Following a star trotter from colthood to the winning of her big race. Columbia.
- f UNUSUAL OCCUPATIONS NO. 2—Carver of exquisite miniature furniture; an angleworm farm; a professional taster of soap; making wax models; etc. Paramount.
- f UPP GENOM LUFTEN (Up in the Air)—Remarkable pictures of passenger aviation. Swedish production. Scandinavian.

- f VITAPHONE PICTORIAL REVIEW NO. 1—Horse racing, wrestling, Gruyere cheese making. Vitaphone.

#### CARTOONS

- f BOSKO AND THE CANNIBALS (Harman-Ising cartoon)—Clever burlesque of swing-music celebrities in the form of frogs. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.  
 fj DOG DAZE—Amusing dog cartoon. Vitaphone.  
 fj EDUCATED FISH—A little fish learns what will happen to naughty fish who play hooky from school, in Technicolor. Paramount.  
 fj FOOTBALL TOUCHER DOWNER, THE—Popeye describes how spinach helped him win a football game in his early youth. Paramount.  
 fj FOXY HUNTER, THE (Betty Boop)—Pudgy and Junior go hunting, with amusing results. Paramount.  
 f I WANNA BE A SAILOR—Color cartoon. Vitaphone.  
 fj PROTEK THE WEAKERIST—Spinach, as usual, saves the day for Popeye and a pekingese when each gets into a fight. Paramount.  
 f ROVER'S RIVAL—Cartoon—dog tricks. Vitaphone.  
 fj SCARY CROWS—A color cartoon, in which the villainous crows who eat up all the garden seeds go unpunished. Columbia.  
 fj \*SPEAKING OF THE WEATHER—A very amusingly clever cartoon in which the figures on magazine covers come to life. Vitaphone.  
 fj SUNBONNET BLUE, A—A gay cartoon about mice in a hat shop. Vitaphone.

#### COMEDIES, MUSICALS, NOVELTIES AND SERIALS

- m ATTIC OF TERROR (Floyd Gibbons "Your True Adventures" series)—Hair-raising adventure of a tobacco salesman in the Cumberland Mts., a generation ago. Vitaphone.  
 f BIG SQUIRI, THE—An amusing bit in which Charley Chase is a soda-fountain clerk who is a detective-story fan. Columbia.  
 f BOSS DIDN'T SAY GOOD MORNING, THE—An amusing sketch, with a serious angle, about a Mr. Jones (everyman) whose feeling of security was ruined by his boss's indigestion. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.  
 j COWBOY SHORTY—Amusing antics of a chimpanzee on a ranch. Paramount.  
 f FLOWERS FROM THE SKY—Good singing and a neat show. Vitaphone.  
 fj FRAMING YOUTH—Our Gang. In which Alfalfa enters a musical contest handicapped by a frog in the throat. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.  
 f FROZEN AFFAIR, A—Evelyn Chandler gives an exhibition of lovely ice-sating. RKO-Radio.  
 f HOW TO START THE DAY—One of Robert Benchley's incomparable expositions of Homo Americanus in his more intimate moments. Very amusing of its kind. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.  
 fj JUNGLE JUVENILES—A Pete Smith specialty, and a real novelty—the adventures of a very small boy and two chimpanzees in the woods. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.  
 fj JUNGLE MENACE (Serial) NOS. 7-10.—Starring Frank Buck—this serial continues to hold its interest and quality. Columbia.  
 f LITTLE JACK HORNER (Strange as It May Seem series)—The real Jack Horner in Henry VIII's time finds his fortune in a plum pie. Columbia.  
 fj LITTLEST DIPLOMAT—Sybil Jason. The Colonel's little granddaughter comes to India and wins the hearts of the post and the natives. In Technicolor. Vitaphone.  
 f MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY, THE—John Litel plays the part of Lt. Nolan, the man condemned never to see or hear of his native land. In Technicolor. Vitaphone.  
 f NECKIN' PARTY, THE—Edgar Bergen takes Charlie McCarthy to a ranch, and there meets another surprising dummy named Elmer Schnur. Vitaphone.  
 f PATHE PARADE NO. 1—An interesting film-magazine presenting advertising models in action, some fantastic music making called "kiddoodling" and views of the ritzy Stork Club. RKO-Radio.  
 fj PUPPET LOVE—Salici puppets on the stage. Vitaphone.  
 f SCREEN SNAPSHOTS NO. 13—The most interesting item is about Earl Foxe's military school, among whose pupils are many small sons of stars. Columbia.  
 f SHOW FOR SALE—Vaudeville acts, but lively ones. Universal.  
 j S.O.S. COAST GUARD (serial) NOS. 9-12—All turns out well, as expected. Republic.  
 fj STARLETS—The juniors give a show, dancing and singing. Vitaphone.  
 f VITAPHONE PICTORIAL REVIEW NO. 2—Mauch Twins; table tennis, fashion show. Vitaphone.

## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures is a citizen body, organized in 1909 by the People's Institute of New York City as a medium for reflecting intelligent public opinion regarding a growing art and entertainment. This is still the Board's function, together with that of disseminating information on the subject of motion pictures and carrying on a constructive program having to do with community cooperation in the advancement and uses of the motion picture.

The National Board is opposed to legal censorship and is in favor of the community better films plan of placing emphasis upon and building support for the finer and more worthwhile films. It is at all times glad to cooperate with any agency to encourage and guide the motion picture in developing its possibilities both as recreation and as entertainment.

It carries on its work through various committees. All members of the committees serve without pay. No member is connected with the motion picture industry. They are representative of varied interests and activities and many are connected with large public welfare organizations or educational institutions.

The General Committee is a body evolved out of the original group organized in 1909. It is the appeal and central advisory committee of the National Board to which policies are referred and to which decisions of the Review Committee regarding pictures may be carried either by the producers or by the Review Committee itself.

The Executive Committee is composed of members of the General Committee and is the directing body of the National Board, charged with the formulation of policies, the election of members, the expenditure of funds and supervision of all administrative affairs.

The Review Committee is a large group of 300 members carrying on the work of reviewing the films. It is divided into sub-groups which meet for review per schedule during each week in the projection rooms of the various motion picture companies.

The Membership Committee supervises the membership list of the Review Committee and recommends the names of proposed new members for consideration by the Executive Committee.

The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays is composed of critics and students of the cinema interested particularly in encouraging the artistic development of the motion picture. It reviews and publishes a critique of the finest films and assists community groups in the showing of unusual films to special audiences. Its pioneer activity has done much to lay the foundation for the Little Photoplay Theatre movement and to stimulate the organization of subscription groups to develop audiences for the support of the creative achievements of the screen.



# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

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PERIODICAL DIVISION



*Jackie Cooper, as Chuck, and the gang in "Boy of the Streets" (see page 9)*

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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

f ADVENTUROUS BLONDE, THE—Glenda Farrell, Barton MacLane. Screenplay by Robertson White and David Diamond. Directed by Frank MacDonald. A mystery comedy, in which a girl star reporter and a police lieutenant—engaged—find a practical joke to prevent their honeymoon turned into a real case. First National.

f AN LEVA DE GAMLA GUDAR (Old Titans Still Are Here)—Edvard Persson. Story and direction Gedeon Wahlberg. A quiet comedy about a small town stationer in Sweden whose children want a snobbish city life—and how they get over it. Entirely in Swedish, only those understanding the language would get much out of it. Scandinavian Talking Pictures.

fj BORROWING TROUBLE—The Jones Family. Story by Robert Chapin and Karen De Wolf. Directed by Frank L. Strayer. Mr. Jones becomes a Big Brother to a tough lad in unfortunate circumstances. This series becomes continually better, and this particular picture, besides its sympathetic insight into average Americans, has—without being heavy about it—a real social angle. 20th Century-Fox.

fj COURAGE OF THE WEST—Bob Baker, Lois January. Screen story by J. Norton Parker. Directed by Joseph H. Lewis. One of the better Westerns. A story of how the "rangers" came into being right after the Civil War when the country was terrorized by outlaws. Well acted with nice music and good riding. Universal.

f \*DAMEL IN DISTRESS, A—Fred Astaire, Joan Fontaine, George Burns and Gracie Allen. Story by P. G. Wodehouse. Directed by George Stevens. A highly amusing and entertaining picture with Burns and Allen supplying the comedy. The story deals with an English girl who is being forced to marry someone she doesn't love, when Fred Astaire dances into her life and wins her love. The episode at the amusement park is clever and hilariously funny. Both the music and dancing are excellent and also the photography. RKO Radio.

f DANGER PATROL — Sally Eilers, John Beal. Screen story by Helen Vreeland and Hilda Vincent. Directed by Lew Landers. A story dedicated to the heroes of the oil fields who handle the nitro-glycerin, showing the hazardous life the men lead and the tragic life of the women. RKO Radio.

f DINNER AT THE RITZ—Annabella, David Niven, Paul Lukas, Romney Brent. Story by Roland Pertwee and Romney Brent. Directed by Harold D. Schuster. A somewhat misleading title for a smart melodrama, involving the search by a daughter of a French banker for her father's murderer. Handsomely done, with considerable tension of interest, but the various kinds of English accent—French, Hungarian, British and American—may confuse some people. 20th Century-Fox.

m \*FIRST LADY—Kay Francis, Verree Teasdale, Walter Connolly, Preston Foster. Play by George S. Kaufman and Katherine Dayton. Directed by Stanley Logan. A highly amusing satirical comedy of life in Washington, and the social and political rivalry of two wives, one of a Secretary of State, the other of a Supreme Court Justice. The comedy is mostly conversational, but bright and sometimes sharp, and a fine cast puts it over. Warner Bros.

f 45 FATHERS—Jane Withers. Story by Mary Bickel. Directed by James Tinling. A typical Jane Withers picture full of noise and rough-house, in which, with the help of a vaudeville couple, she saves a rich young man from a designing blonde. 20th Century-Fox.

f \*HURRICANE, THE—Jon Hall, Dorothy Lamour, Thomas Mitchell. Novel by Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall. Directed by John Ford. A stunning spectacle of the South Seas, beginning with a young native's unjust imprisonment and attempts to escape, with a terrific hurricane as climax. Exciting and thrilling, and an amazing example of what movie technicians can do in creating natural phenomena. United Artists.

(Continued on page 14)



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## A New Member of the General Committee

WE are happy to announce with this issue of the Magazine the election of Rev. John F. Kelly to the General Committee of the National Board of Review. Father Kelly has had an interesting career. Born in Archbald, Pennsylvania, October 7th, 1895, he attended as a youth the public elementary and high schools. Entering St. Thomas College in Scranton, Pennsylvania, he received the Bachelor of Arts Degree from that institution in June, 1916. The following year he entered the United States Quartermaster's Department, United States Army (Civil Service), at Philadelphia, and later on in the same year enlisted in the United States Army and was stationed at Fort Thomas, Kentucky, where he served in the field artillery.

When the World War ended, he was a student at the Army Officers' Training School, Camp Taylor, Kentucky. He received the Master of Arts Degree from Fordham University in 1922 and was grad-

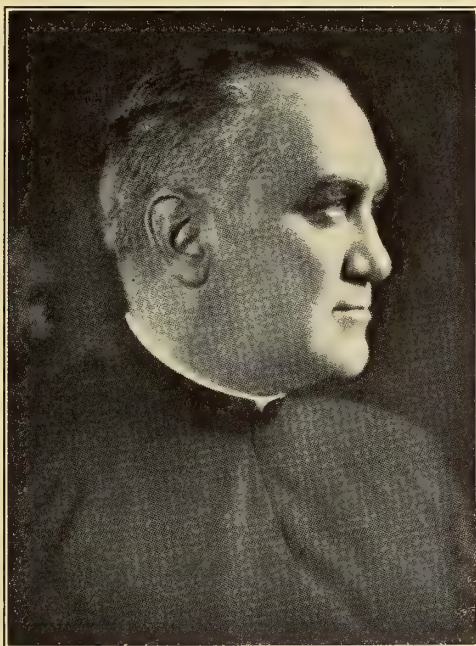
uated from the Law School in 1924, after which he became a member of the New York and Pennsylvania Bar and was associated in the practice of law with the firm of Simpson, Thacher and Bartlett of New York City. Feeling the call to the priest-

hood, he entered Our Lady of Angels Seminary, Niagara University, and was ordained to the priesthood in June, 1931. Father Kelly is at present Assistant-pastor of the Church of the Transfiguration, Brooklyn, New York.

With this broad background, it is natural that Father Kelly's interests should also be broad and include the subject of the motion picture. Like so many other people of culture and position today, he sees in the motion picture screen a great field of social function through

worthwhile entertainment and is particularly interested in the response of young people to good pictures, believing that here is the motion picture audience of tomorrow

(Continued on page 5)



Rev. John F. Kelly

## New York City Children in the Movies

NEW YORK STATE for many years has had a law forbidding the admission of children under 16 to motion picture theatres unaccompanied by parent or guardian or other adult, authorized by parent or guardian. This law was difficult to observe and was consequently often disregarded. It was not always possible for the ticket seller to tell if an older child wishing to purchase a ticket was under or over 16, or to tell if the adult purchasing the ticket for the child was properly with the child or just a "pick up" convenience. Youngsters having the price of admission, but knowing they could not buy tickets, would stand outside of the theatre and approach some adult about to enter and ask him to buy also a children's ticket, for which they would give him the money. This, of course, was observing the law as far as the ticket seller was concerned, for she might not know whether the adult was with the child or not, but the child knew he was not obeying the law, as did the adult buying the ticket. This convenience of adopting an adult for the moment might lead to results more harmful than having the child buy his own ticket, but this, of course, could not legally be done by the ticket seller with the law as it was in effect. And even if the adult buying the ticket had no thought of annoying the child, neither did he have any thought of looking after the child; his idea was "give the youngster a break, if he can't buy a ticket why can't I buy it for him."

Many interested citizens talked about a remedy for this situation but New York City's Mayor LaGuardia did more than talk, he acted and in the summer of 1936 a new city law was passed which provided for the licensing of theatres to which children could be admitted.

It has, therefore, been in effect a year and a half and perhaps it is time now to answer some of the questions which have come to us as to its merit. We have thus

sought to secure answers from a number of those administering, applying and affected by the law. And we will present them to our readers, because of the general interest in the matter of children's motion picture attendance.

The regulation in New York City is under the supervision of the Commissioner of Licenses, Mr. Paul Moss. Mr. Moss believes that the law is working out well. He is experienced enough not to expect perfection from it and admits that there may be some justified complaints, but he says these have been few, and that expressions of satisfaction have been more numerous.

The theatres pay a fee of \$10.00 a year to have their house licensed for the admission of children between the ages of 8 and 15. The license is granted only upon the condition that full compliance is to be made with provisions for the care of the children in the theatre. The first provision demands that "A separate section of seats shall be set aside on the main or orchestra floor . . . for unaccompanied children, and adults shall in no event be admitted to such section during the time the children are there." A further provision requires that this section set aside for children shall be accessible to exits.

Commissioner Moss applied the descriptive phrase of "like an accordion" to this section, meaning it could be expanded or contracted. Fewer seats being made available at the hours when fewer children were in the theatre and more seats at the hours when there were more children. This is done by the replacement of a movable sign denoting the children's section. A matron takes charge of the needed space for the children and the consequence size of the special section allotted, and at no time does she permit adults to sit in the children's section or children unaccompanied to sit outside of the section. Seats for all must be available in the section and children are not permitted to stand.



An important provision of the law concerns the matrons, in fact this point is so strongly stressed that the law is popularly known as the "matron law." This provision reads "One matron shall be provided by the licensed theatre to be in attendance at all times during the time that children are there. No person shall be deemed a matron within the meaning of this local law unless such person has been licensed by the department of health . . . and qualifies under such physical, and/or other examinations as the commissioner of health department shall prescribe as relevant to the functions to be performed by such said matron."

Commissioner Moss remarked that the New York theatres have shown their interest by generally applying for the license and employing the matrons. Only certain larger Broadway houses, which do not cater to children's attendance, and some of the specialized Little Theatres showing foreign films have not found it in keeping with the policy or program of their houses to make this special arrangement for caring for unaccompanied children. But the neighborhood houses have, after a tryout of the plan, found it worthwhile to renew the license.

There is a provision also in regard to the hours. "Unaccompanied children shall not be admitted to any such licensed theatre, except during the time when their school classes are not in session. No unaccompanied children shall be admitted in such licensed theatre after six o'clock in the afternoon, except that during July and August the children may be admitted . . . during the entire day until seven o'clock in the afternoon." The New York school hours are irregular, some children being in the classroom during morning hours and some during afternoon hours. The matron informs herself as to the school hours in her locality and knows whether a child is likely to be free from school at the time when he comes to the theatre. There was, according to Commissioner Moss, some consideration given to including in the law a statement of definite hours of the day when the theatres could admit children, but with the varying school hours throughout the

city it was deemed wiser to make the law read: "except during the time when their school classes are not in session."

The Commissioner's office, the Police Department and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children keep close watch to see that the law is observed and very few irregularities or complaints have followed its application. Commissioner Moss thinks the procedure allowed by this law provides a more than adequate solution of a particularly difficult problem. For it does not tend, he says, as did the old regulation, to make law breakers of the theatre management or of the children. The children no longer sneak into the theatres and try to hide themselves, but openly buy their tickets and freely enjoy the show as welcomed and protected patrons. And it has also given the parent a feeling of security in knowing that his child's welfare is being especially looked after in the theatre under the watchful eye of a matron who understands the problem of children.

B. G.

## 4 Star Final

ARE you familiar with the junior motion picture publication, the "4-Star Final"? If not, and if you have, or wish to have, junior activity in your Council, you will want to know about it. It is the monthly service available to the National Board's affiliated 4-Star Club leaders and others. What juniors are doing or can do is recorded there, serving as an interchange of plans and progress. The publication is 75c a year and a sample copy will gladly be sent for you to see and to learn more about this growing junior organization activity.

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*(Continued from page 3)*

and that the training of the critical faculties of boys and girls is one way of assuring the continuance of the production of fine and intelligent films.

The National Board of Review heartily welcomes Father Kelly to its membership, feeling that his interest and counsel will prove of especial value.

# How Films Affect Health

By DR. J. F. MONTAGUE

*Dr. J. F. Montague, a member of the General Committee of the National Board, who is Director of the New York Intestinal Sanitarium and editor of "Health Digest" has given us here from his interest in the subject some ideas both on health films and health in the films.*

THERE are few who will deny that the motion picture film has shown itself to be a great educating agency in the field of health. Certainly, to deny it is to deny that it is an avenue of expression, and there is no one who will claim this. There are, of course, very obvious ways in which films can affect health. In the instance of educational films showing hygienic problems and their method of treatment the film is doing exactly what a pamphlet or a book would do—namely, it is conveying information which its title probably promises. Then, too, in the case of strictly technical films such as medical and surgical films it is quite obvious that the film serves indirectly, in any event, as a means of aiding the cause of health.

However, there are ways in which the health film has a definite influence on health without, in any way, attempting to preach the gospel of health in a forthright manner. For instance, when a recent ruling was passed permitting children under the age of sixteen years to attend motion picture theatres unescorted by an adult it was found that many of these children remained in the motion picture theater for hours at a time seeing the show several times. Thus, quite apart from the text of the film, the mere fact of confinement indoors when they should have been outdoors exercising, was sufficient to warrant the conclusion that the films did not help the health of children who were so unwise as to overindulge in them.

Then, too, in another instance where the state law definitely specified that children be given seats near the exits, it was found that, owing to the fact that they were placed on the far side of the hall, in many instances they developed eyestrain simply because of the angles from which they had

to view the films. This is interesting, particularly when we contemplate the fact that the regular patrons must view the films from these same seats and though they probably do not frequent the theater as often as the children, the fact is that their visit to the theater does represent an experience in eyestrain.

Quite aside from these rather outstanding examples of the effect of motion pictures on children is the fact that the content of the film has also its influence. It is for this reason that many people deplore seeing in the newsreel or in "shorts" the spectacle of pie-eating contests and cruller-consuming contests since these are purely propaganda for the commercial interests sponsoring the product shown and they have no consideration for the welfare of either the participants of the contest or the young minds who view the newsreel showing it. Certainly a demonstration of gluttony or bad manners or both cannot be regarded as a constructive feature, and certainly not as one which would tend toward better health.

Motion picture producers and exhibitors should give particular thought to the possible influence that such films might have upon their juvenile audience. On the other hand, the motion picture, as an avenue of expression and a channel for instruction, can and has done much to influence people in the proper selection of food and in the cultivation of hygienic habits. Certainly Pop-Eye the Sailor has had more success in convincing young America as to the desirability of spinach as a food, than all the mothers.

CONSIDERING that it is imperative for film patrons to rest their eyes at intervals, the Municipal Government of Mexico City, has ordered theatres to provide three intermissions during every performance. Each of these rest periods must be of not less than five minutes and after there has been an exhibition for ninety consecutive minutes.



## New Sound and Sight

**S.M.P.E.** "What does that mean to me," you may say in my motion picture work?" It means much to those who wish for and work for the best in both motion picture production and motion picture projection. For what can be accomplished by the fine work of the best screen actors, directors and writers, if combined with their efforts there is not the best work of those in the more technical field of motion picture recording and projecting.

Therefore, it is interesting and informative to bring to the forefront of our thought some of the many activities of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers. We could not all be in attendance at their recent annual fall convention in New York City, but something of that convention may be brought with interest to the layman to give him an idea of the unceasing activity which goes on in the laboratories working toward technical perfection and the utilization of new ideas and methods in the motion picture.

"Third dimension in sound" was given its first public demonstration at this convention. A startling new result in talking motion pictures is produced thereby, wherein the sound effects and the dialogue come directly from their point of origin on the screen. This more life-like process is called stereophonic or third-dimensional, as it projects sound in both a sidewise and back and front direction. A moving ping-pong ball with the sound following the movement of the ball gave effective demonstration of the method as did also the playing of symphonic selections with the various players located by the sounds coming from their instruments.

Mr. I. P. Maxfield of the Bell Telephone Laboratories explained the system by saying: "In present-day talking pictures, we obtain only an illusion of sound, because sound is picked up with only one microphone amplifier channel and recorded on only one sound track. Stereophonic pictures, however, pick up sound by two channels and the output of each is recorded on

a separate sound track on the film, each of which is a recording of just one channel. In reproducing the two sound tracks in the theatre, the output of each track is fed to a separate set of loudspeakers at the sides of the screen. The effect on the listener is that he is actually enjoying 'two-ear hearing' instead of 'one-ear hearing.'"

Third-dimension pictures, as well as sound, were also demonstrated under the topic "Possibilities of Stereoscopic Motion Pictures" by G. W. Wheelwright, 3rd, of the Land-Wheelwright Laboratories. The process includes the use of polarized glass filters in production and in viewing the film. Some of us have had experience with the use of the red and green spectacles in looking at stereoscopic movies but this process was called more practical and it promises a great improvement for color films in curing tonal frictions.

Something else new which we may expect from the work of these technical experts is the elimination of the frame effect on the screen by means of a "screen synchro-field." This works through an arrangement of curved reflecting and diffusing surfaces behind the screen making the picture appear to fill the entire field of vision of the audience. Instead of the present artificial frame surrounding the picture there is a synchronization of light effect blending the picture with the surrounding field. This will make for more realism and beauty in picture projection, and too, it will have the advantage of lessening eye strain by eliminating the contrast of lighted screen and dark border.

Television as a word is not quite so new to the layman as these other terms, but as to its practical application today certainly the engineers know much more than we, the public, and for them was staged for the first time a demonstration of a broadcast television program projected on a motion picture screen 3 x 4 feet. A number of improvements over earlier demonstrations on a small 7½ x 10 inch television screen

were noted by the use of this new Kinescope, or image projector. However, television was still described as an "unfinished product" commercially, but with a future. And doubtless it will improve as the motion picture has so remarkably in the three decades or so since its beginning.

From these inventions, we see that those who have been responsible for this remarkable development are not content to allow the motion picture to stand still satisfied with the result obtained from past efforts, but are going to utilize new inventions and methods to aid the audience in its enjoyment of seeing the best motion pictures at their best.

B. G.

## Film Notes

THE Section of Motion Pictures of the Pan American Union at Washington, D. C., offers to schools and colleges, study clubs, service groups and other interested organizations, motion pictures on the Republics of Latin America. They are loaned free of charge, except that the borrower agrees to pay transportation charges. There are nine titles now available and a new series of sound pictures of each of the twenty-one American Republics of Central and South America is in the making.

A two reel silent 16mm. film entitled *Found in a Book* has been released for general distribution by the Bell and Howell Company. This film was produced by the Library School of the University of Illinois and it pictures the use of library facilities. The story concerns the efforts of two students to gather material for a theme, one succeeds quickly by using the aid of the library, while the other without this is far less successful.

*The Power Within*, a new 2-reel silent motion picture that depicts the historic development, construction, and operation of the modern internal combustion engine and operating parts of the automobile, is the latest addition of the U. S. Bureau of Mines

film library, which now consists of over 4,000 reels.

## Motion Picture Appreciation Course

A short course in motion picture appreciation was held on five Monday afternoons, October 25-November 22, at Teachers College, Columbia University.

Among the topics discussed were social values in motion pictures, children's standards, art values in photography and color, speech in motion pictures, music in motion pictures, and for the last meeting, teachers' problems in the use of motion pictures with the showing and explanation by a high school boy of a school-made film. Motion pictures, stills, records, and the piano were used in illustration of the various topics. The National Board offered its cooperation and aid in this course.

Among those who spoke were Mrs. Mary Allan Abbott, Dr. William H. Blake of the Speech Department, Professor Douglas Moore of the Music Department, Professor Charles J. Martin of the Fine Arts Department and Mr. Edward S. Fulcomer of the Lincoln School, Teachers College.

## Film Awards

*BOY of the Streets*, reviewed in the Exceptional Photoplays Department of this issue of the Magazine, has been awarded the honorary medal of merit by "Parents' Magazine" in the January issue.

The Motion Picture Safety Committee awarded its 1937 film prize, the David S. Beyer Trophy, to Columbia Pictures for *The Devil Is Driving*, the film which "served most during 1937 to encourage safer use of the streets and highways." The award was made at the 26th National Safety Congress at Kansas City.

*March of Time* has been awarded the Clement Cleveland Memorial Medal for the "outstanding piece of work in cancer education during the year."



# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS DEPARTMENT

This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of *Exceptional and Honorable*

*Mention.* The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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## Boy of the Streets

Screenplay by Gilson Brown and Scott Darling from an original screen story by Rowland Brown, directed by William Nigh, photographed by Gilbert Warrentown. Scott R. Dunlap, in charge of production. Produced and distributed by Monogram Pictures Corp.

### The cast

Chuck ..... Jackie Cooper  
Nora ..... Maureen O'Connor  
Julie ..... Kathleen Burke  
Rourke ..... Robert Emmett O'Connor  
Mary Brennan (Chuck's mother) Marjorie Main  
Blackie ..... Matty Fain  
Tim Farley ..... George Cleveland  
Doctor ..... Gordon Elliot  
Fog Horn Brennan (Chuck's father) Guy Usher  
Spike ..... Paul White  
Tony ..... Don Latorre

THIS is a picture made without one of those fabulous budgets that get a lot of publicity and ensure an elaborate and handsome production such as often gives glamor and huge audiences to something essentially trivial. It is a modest and unpretentious picture with a core of honesty and sincerity that ought to make it a lot of friends, friends who will send their friends to see it.

It will inevitably be compared with *Dead End*. Another, and perhaps more interesting comparison would be with *The Devil is a Sissy*, also written by Rowland Brown. The theme of it is the influence of slum life, particularly on boys. Mr. Brown knows movie technique, and what he writes is straight motion picture, without running any

danger of being called a photographed play, as *Dead End* was by so many critics. He knows boys, too, and here, just as in the *Devil-Sissy* film, he gets into the insides of them as Sidney Kingsley completely failed to do in his almost stenographic report of how slum boys talk without any but the most surface hints of how they think and feel. The character of Chuck Brennan in this picture is full-length and three-dimensional, with plenty of that fourth dimension, unseen but inescapable, which gives the figure its animating springs of life.

Chuck is a lively, intelligent and ambitious kid of sixteen. His father is his ideal, because he thinks his father is a man who lives by his brains and that is the type of man he admires—an executive, though that term was probably not in Chuck's vocabulary. The boy is learning to be an executive in his own way, as leader of a gang who are getting their first training in outwitting authority (the cops) by sallying forth from the "club" in a deserted car-barn to play pranks on the citizenry and outfight rival gangs.

Chuck's mother supports the family by taking in washing—a whining, complaining, decent woman who has helped conceal from her son that his father is really no good at all, just a fawning sycophant for the minor neighborhood political big shot, always talking grandiose but futile plans for making a lot of money. Now she is realizing that the boy is in danger of growing up to be like his old man.

Chuck's great disillusionment about his father comes when, after an outburst from his mother, he makes up his mind to go to

work, and—following in father's footsteps—goes to the local boss for a job as "leader". There he finds his father being sent out to buy a cigar, grateful for the privilege of even that menial connection with the district big-man. He finds his father is just a stooge, all his pride in him is smashed, he wants to get away. He tries to enlist in the navy, but he is still a few months too young for that. Then he happens to attract the attention of a gambler who is "taking over" the district—a somewhat flashy young man whose good clothes, swell apartment, plenty of money in pocket, and most of all whose careful flattery of Chuck win the boy's admiration and loyalty. A young gangster is in the hatching stage.

A shooting affair, which happens logically enough, sets him right, and at the end he has enlisted in the navy—no ideal solution for the problem, perhaps, but a natural thing for Chuck to have done and for his folks and friends to have approved of.

Chuck and his family, the other boys, the cops and judges and saloonkeepers and even the gangsters, are all honestly depicted, with an atmosphere of environment in setting that is splendidly realistic. The element of social betterment, represented by a slum doctor and a rich girl who inherits and tries to improve the tenements, is not so fortunate, partly because they are not acted prepossessingly and partly because they constantly excite the suspicion that they are going to burst out into a spurious and hackneyed movie-romance. There is also a bit too much of the Mother Machree brand of Irish sentimentality—true enough to the natures of these people but managed in a trite and over-saccharine fashion. But only to people too fastidiously sensitive to minor flaws will these things dim the essential sincerity and power of the main story, which really gains instead of being hurt by the lack of the slick polish that has become such an over-rated standard for movies. And no one can miss the fact that Jackie Cooper, always one of the best child actors, has grown in something more than height and muscle. For any producer who will trouble to find the right parts for him he can go on being a swell actor indefinitely.

J. S. H.

## The Life and Loves of Beethoven

*Written and directed by Abel Gance, with dialogue by Steve Passeur, photographed by Robert LeFebvre and Marc Fossard, settings by Jacques Colombier, edited by Marguerite Beague. Music by Orchestre de la Societe des Concerts du Conservatoire de Paris under the direction of Louis Masson. Produced by Abel Gance for Generales Productions, distributed by World Pictures Corporation.*

### The cast

*Ludwig van Beethoven* ..... Harry Baur  
*Therese von Brunswick* ..... Annie Ducaux  
*Juliette Guicciardi* ..... Jany Holt  
*Schuppanzigh* ..... Pauley  
*Count Gallenberg* ..... Debucourt  
*Count Guicciardi* ..... Lucien Rozemberg  
*Countess Guicciardi* ..... Yoland Lafon  
*Zmeskill* ..... Lucas Gridoux

ABEL GANCE couldn't be called an old man, but in the history of movies he seems like an old timer. Harry Alan Potamkin used to call him the French D. W. Griffith, and while it is dangerous to call anybody the French or German or Russian Anybody-but-himself, there are a lot of things in Gance, to this day, that suggest our own Old Master. One obvious resemblance is a fondness for sweet close-ups of pretty girls, all misty at the edges and pastel-toned, inserted like an elaborate bit of embroidery upon a general surface where they seem—now—unnatural and affected. The same sort of over-sweetness often gets into the spirit with which he handles situations and emotions, and there are Griffith-like resorts to humor that seem to have come straight from old-fashioned vaudeville. But essentially Gance is individual, with a style of his own, and a director who still experiments with his movie-making tools, as he has always done. *J'Accuse* remains in memory as one of the notable French films of the silent days, and *Napoleon* was conceived and partly executed on as grand a scale as any picture ever made. With its three screens and its dependence on a special orchestral and vocal accompaniment, it never got an adequate showing outside the Opera in Paris. The brutally shortened version that was shown here left out all the striking originality of its technique.

In this new film Gance has tackled one



Harry Baur as  
Beethoven and  
Therese von Brunswick  
as Annie Ducaux  
in  
"The Life and Loves of  
Beethoven"



of the hardest possible things, to present a creative genius in his creative moments. Beethoven's importance to the world is in his music, and—as only God can make a tree—probably no one will ever be able to show how great music comes to be written. Beethoven's life, and particularly his loves, might, aside from their unknown effect upon his work, have been the life and loves of anybody, and not entrancing things to contemplate no matter whose. Who his "immortal beloved" was nobody knows, and the romantic mystery of it is not much better than the stuff of which Sunday Supplement stories are made. Gance has devised a plausible solution of it as a framework on which to hang episodes which—it is to be inferred—inspired some of his music. They serve, after a fashion, as a plot. How effectively can be guessed from the fact that even after a recent seeing of the picture it is hard to remember anything

except that Beethoven was a composer who suffered the tragic calamity of becoming deaf. The "loves" remain wispy phantoms, rather indistinguishable from each other, who were always appearing in unaccountable ways to peer through his windows, enter through his doorways, and hover over him at his desk or piano. Perhaps that was the intention—that his inspirations were, after all, unaccountable phantoms. But it is hard not to take them literally, as carefully accoutred ladies from the French stage, confusing while being seen, and afterwards quickly forgotten.

The film's strength—and it is a considerable strength—is in having presented a really fine actor, Harry Baur, in a part to which he brings convincing and moving eloquence, in having devised a combination of camera and sound-track to make Beethoven's deafness a real and tragic experience which the audience can share, and in using

Beethoven music to give an incomparable lift to the emotions of the drama. Harry Baur's physical characteristics make it impossible for him ever to look like a youthful Beethoven, but without any obvious recourse to make-up he is able to assume that strong, heavy mask that we remember as Beethoven's face, and without mugging or contortions he has made that mask singularly expressive of indescribable things which came out in his music. What one remembers of Beethoven's life is chiefly that he was a difficult, tortured, incomprehensible man, and somehow Harry Baur has put that sort of man before us. The ladies who were his possible loves do not matter more than the skies and birds and thunder-clouds whose effect on him were also a part of his mystery: the mystery is the man, and that much of him Harry Baur has made palpable and impressive.

Two episodes stick in the memory (it is a weakness of the picture that the whole thing does not hang together as a memorable unity). One is highly theatrical in its conception, but effective—Juliette's wedding, where Beethoven locks himself in the organ loft of the church and thunders out a funeral march during the ceremony. The other is really splendid—that in which he realizes his deafness, with ominous grinding noises drowning out the sounds of the world outside him, and his desperate flight into the town and out into the fields, trying to re-catch some aural connection with the life about him, when a fiddle playing, children shouting, a blacksmith hammering, birds singing, are all mere sights for his eyes, nothing to hear—only the inner music that these things and his feeling about them create, left to him.

With such things as these to remember it is easy to forget the filigree and cheaply expensive prettiness with which the story of the "loves" has been conceived and told. And there is the music—some of its creation undoubtedly mythical, and sentimentally mythical at that. Used with dubious chronology, but with often a magnificent relevance to mood. A profound joy to listen to.

J. S. H.

## The Return of Maxim

Written by Gregory Kozintsev, Leonid Trauberg and Leo Slavin, directed by Gregory Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg. Music by Dmitri Shostakovich. Produced by Lenfilm, distributed by Amkino.

### The cast

Maxim .....	Boris Chirkov
Natasha .....	Valentina Kibardina
Erofeyev .....	A. Zrazhevsky
Turayev .....	A. Kuznetsov
Factory Clerk .....	M. Zharov
Menshevik .....	A. Bondy
Nikolai .....	V. Vanin
Mishchenko .....	A. Chistiakov
Strikebreaker .....	Y. Tolubeyev

THIS is a continuation of that earlier Soviet film, *The Youth of Maxim*, which told of how a boy, because a fellow worker who was his friend was killed in a labor struggle, awoke to a consciousness of the social wrongs of which he and others like him were victims, and became a young revolutionist in the rising of 1907. At the end of that film he was sent to prison. At the beginning of this he has come out of prison, grown and strengthened in his convictions and deliberately devoted to the struggle of the workers.

*The Return of Maxim* covers the times before the World War, making plain the reasons why revolution found fertile ground for the seeds that come to such astounding fruition in the final Bolshevik rising and triumph. The graft and rottenness that permeated the whole class that was profiting from the war carried its own poison of destruction, and when the whole machine collapsed men like Maxim had made their plans, done their preparatory work, and were ready to lead the workers and peasants to what they hoped would be freedom. The picture closes with Maxim marching off to the war—one knows, however, what he will be fighting for, and what victory is his ultimate aim.

Like so many other Russian films, this one has its roots in the revolution, that soil that has proved so rich and sustaining for the peculiar genius of the Russian cinema. It has that special kind of reality and power that art can derive from faith. What has been said about the older masterpieces of Eisenstein and Pudovkin, and later pic-



tures like *Chapayev*, can only be repeated about *The Return of Maxim*. If it has an outstanding fault as a motion picture it is in an over-abundance of speech-making—stirring enough, perhaps, to those who understand what is being said, but for all its obvious effectiveness, repetitious. Boris Chirkov is still the central character, the man who grew from the boy Maxim, and he personifies the thing that made these films possible, and makes them so vividly moving and credible. The other actors, as usual, do not seem so much actors as people caught by some unseen camera living their lives.

J. S. H.

## Anent Comedies

ONE has to tread carefully in speaking of comedies. Nothing else in the way of movie entertainment depends so much on the individual taste, the individual mood, the individual digestion, and what may have turned me sour may have filled you with delight.

What with Hollywood turning out so much that is intended to be gay, there ought to be something to suit any appetite—but recommending is still a risky business. Perhaps the safest guides are the players, because if you can't meet the actors on an amiable footing how can you enjoy them when they are being antic? You have to like Irene Dunne—or at least not dislike her—to be in the friendly state of mind that would make you amenable to the pleasant humors of *The Awful Truth*, which has a knowing director's hand at its helm to steer through the familiar complications of Arthur Richman's old stage farce about divorce.

In the same way you have to be willing to accept Leslie Howard unseriously to find fun in *It's Love I'm After* and *Stand In*, each of which takes pokes at actors—one Shakespearean actors, the other the makers of movies. In one, in case the Howard comedy fails, there is Eric Blore at his Bloriest, in the other Alan Mowbray and Humphrey Bogart, always to be depended on for what they have to do. And

ability to take or leave Joan Blondell puts *Stand in* and *The Perfect Specimen* into the same brackets. But unless you care for May Robson in her patented style of boorish old woman, take along some cotton for your ears when you go to see the latter, which has a lot of fun in it in the Happened-One-Night tradition.

Affection for Robert Benchley's special ways should make *Live Love and Learn* something to be grateful for, since it gives him a full-length part, along with one of Robert Montgomery's lightly expert characterizations. Frank Morgan and a whole troupe of people who can be funny when they have a chance (E. E. Clive and Herman Bing among them) lighten up another three-word fantasy, *Beg Borrow or Steal*.

Something out of the ordinary might have been expected from *A Damsel in Distress*, since Wodehouse wrote it. The fact is, it sometimes limps as comedy, so many things in it seem so much better as ideas than they actually turn out to be on the screen. Reginald Gardiner's butler, for instance, afflicted with a mania for bursting into operatic aria under suitable excitation. But as a dancing show for Fred Astaire it breaks new ground, almost literally. Over a stile, over a bridge—all confines are abolished; and the carnival scene, where all the apparatus of merry-go-round and other mechanical amusement park devices take their part in a goofy ballet, is something joyously different from the Ziegfeldian spectacles the musical movies usually offer. And why does Fred Astaire have to have a plot anyway, any more than Mickey Mouse?

Satire and slapstick have violently joined forces in *Nothing Sacred*. It sticks magnificently to its theme, which is to crack viciously at the New York habit of making itself silly over notoriety, but a lot of it is the kind of fun you get—or don't get—from throwing banana peels under people's feet. And a lot depends, as per above, on reactions to Miss Lombard and Mr. March. But the season has vouchsafed no heartier laugh than one long, deep-muscled guffaw provided by Maxie Rosenbloom, who is no actor at all, and has no need to be.

J. S. H.

## Selected Pictures Guide

(Continued from page 2)

- f I'LL TAKE ROMANCE—Grace Moore, Melvyn Douglas. Story by Stephen Morehouse Avery. Directed by Edward H. Griffith. A very entertaining picture with excellent singing and highly amusing comedy supplied by Stuart Erwin. The plot deals with an opera star and a South American operatic manager who fall in love. For the most part the music is operatic. Columbia.
- 
- m LAST GANGSTER, THE—Edward G. Robinson, James Stewart, Lionel Stander, Rose Stradner. Story by William A. Wellman and Robert Carson. Directed by Edward Ludwig. Exciting melodrama of a gangster jailed for income tax evasion and the situation that developed with his ten-year old son when he came out of Alcatraz. Interesting characters and plot, with no crime glorification but a long punishment for crime—physical as well as psychological punishment. Good cast and direction. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- 
- f MERRY GO ROUND OF 1938—Bert Lahr, Alice Brady. Screen story by Monte Brien and Henry Myers. Directed by Irving Cummings. A highly amusing comedy romance. Four vaudeville actors find themselves foster-fathers of an orphan girl. Clever and well done. Universal.
- 
- fj \*NAVY BLUE AND GOLD—Robert Young, James Stewart, Florence Rice, Tom Brown. Screen play by George Bruce. Directed by Sam Wood. A rousing yarn of football at Annapolis, full of collegiate and navy spirit. Good cast and production, and excellent entertainment. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- 
- m NOTHING SACRED — Carole Lombard, Frederic March, Walter Connolly. Story by James H. Street, screenplay by Ben Hecht. Directed by William A. Wellman. A satirical farce, dealing with New York's habit of making heroes of sensational figures, and the newspaper habit of playing up to it. The figure in this case is a girl supposed to be doomed to death from radium poisoning. It ranges from brilliant cleverness to out-and-out slapstick. United Artists.
- 
- f OLD WYOMING TRAIL, THE — Charles Starrett. Original story by J. Benton Cheney. Directed by Folmer Blagstad. A familiar tale of bad men trying to get a ranch but it is well done. Columbia.
- 
- m PORTIA ON TRAIL—Frieda Inescort, Walter Abel. Story by Faith Baldwin. Directed by George Nicholls, Jr. A dramatic story of mother love. A successful woman lawyer in defending a young girl on a murder charge reveals her own tragic life and gains the love and respect of her son and the man she loves. Republic.
- 
- f SECOND HONEYMOON—Tyrone Power, Loretta Young. Magazine story by Philip Wylie. Directed by Walter Lang. Light comedy, in which a young ex-husband wins back his divorced wife. Laid in Florida, with bright local color. 20th Century-Fox.
- 
- f STAND-IN—Leslie Howard, Joan Blondell, Humphrey Bogart. Saturday Evening Post Serial by Charles Budington Kelland. Directed by Tay Garnell. A lively comedy, hilarious in many spots, about a mathematically-minded young business man who goes to Hollywood to investigate the financial difficulties of a studio. Its glimpses of the Hollywood mad-house are vastly entertaining. United Artists.
- 
- fj \*SUBMARINE D-1 — Pat O'Brien, Wayne Morris, George Brent, Doris Weston. Story by Commander Frank Wead. Directed by Lloyd Bacon. The plot is unusual—a rivalry between two men for a girl—but the life and work aboard a submarine, culminating in war manoeuvres, is interesting, entertaining and instructive. A careful production and good actors. First National.
- 
- f SWING IT PROFESSOR—Pinky Tomlin, Paula Stone. Story suggested by Connie Lee. Directed by Marshall Neilen. Amusing comedy of a young man who is violently opposed to "swing" but who finds that he must change his views to keep up with modern music. A couple of catchy tunes and Pinky Tomlin is a pleasing actor. Melody.
- 
- fj THOROUGHBREDS DON'T CRY—Mickey Rooney, Judy Garland, Ronald Sinclair. Story by Eleanore Griffin and J. Walter Rubin. Directed by Alfred E. Green. An imaginary tale of horse-racing and the friendship of two boys, one a tough little jockey and the other a "stout fellah" lad from Bagdad. Lively and interesting picture of its type, with some entertaining minor characters. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- 

## SHORT SUBJECTS

### INFORMATIONALS

- fj BALL TOSSERS (Grantland Rice Sportlight)—The "Diamond Oilers" a man's basketball team and the "Tulsa Stenos" a girl's team show some marvelous playing. Excellent slow motion shots. Paramount.
- f BERGSLAGSVINTER (Winter in Bergslagen)—A series of interesting sketches of winter life in Sweden. Scandinavian Talking Pictures.
- fj COPENHAGEN — A Fitzpatrick Traveltalk in technicolor and good. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj \*DECATHLON CHAMPION (Pete Smith Speciality)—Showing the rise of Glenn Morris from farm-boy to Olympic champion. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f DUDE RANCH, THE (The Road to Romance Series)—Lovely scenery in which tenderfoots play at rough living. 20th Century-Fox.
- f GOING PLACES NO. 40—Lowell Thomas shows us farm magic, growing vegetables in water with chemicals instead of soil. The Islands of Pitcairn and Easter. Universal.



- f GOING PLACES NO. 41—Lowell Thomas takes us to visit an Indian game reserve in Washington State. Universal.
- f GOING PLACES NO. 42—Manufacturing charms for the Hollywood stars to wear on their arms. Diving for turtles in the Bahamas. Universal.
- f GOING PLACES NO. 43—Lowell Thomas takes us to Mexico to see the making of the famous Mexican shawls. A trip to Provincetown showing a beach artist who makes weird birds out of beach combings. Universal.
- fj KING WITHOUT A CROWN, A—An interesting picture of the historical mystery of the Lost Dauphin, the son of Marie Antoinette who some believe grew to manhood in America. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f MARCH OF TIME NO. 4—Concerning the betting laws in England; interesting study of the causes of heart ailments; the issue between the salmon fishers of Alaska and the Japanese fisherman. RKO Radio.
- f MYSTERIOUS CEYLON (Newman Travelogue)—A travelogue in technicolor of the Island of Ceylon. Vitaphone.
- f PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 4 — Nassau, Huckleberry harvest in Oregon; Steel never dies—scrap steel is used over and over. Paramount.
- f PATHE PARADE NO. 2—Best dressed women in the world—the making of dummies for store windows. Romanoff Treasures—the costly treasures once belonging to the Romanoffs. Professional school—how the children of stage, screen, and radio keep up with their lessons between rehearsal and on the road. RKO Radio.
- fj POPULAR SCIENCE NO. 2—Showing the dream car of tomorrow is practical for today. Device for rocking beds so that invalids can change position without effort. A gemologist who tests the worth of gems. Elaborate stockings designed by a man in Hollywood. The "seeing eye," dogs trained to lead the blind. Paramount.
- fj \*ROMANCE OF RADIUM, THE (Pete Smith Specialty)—An unusual informative exposition of the discovery, development and uses of radium. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj SET 'EM UP—Bowling interestingly shown. Columbia.
- fj \*SKI CHAMPIONS (Pete Smith Specialty)—Though the subject is familiar the way it is handled is unusual and remarkable. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj STOCKHOLM, THE PRIDE OF SWEDEN—A good Fitzpatrick Traveltalk in technicolor. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f STRANGER THAN FICTION NO. 44—Strange people and things everywhere. Universal.
- f TUNA—Thrilling picture of tuna fishing off the coast of South America. Paramount.
- f VITAPHONE PICTORIAL REVIEW NO. 3—Covers training retrievers, a Hollywood rodeo and the manufacture of beautiful useful things. Vitaphone.

#### CARTOONS AND COMEDIES

- fj CLOCK GOES ROUND AND ROUND, THE (A Scrappy Cartoon)—About the strange results of Scrappy stopping all the clocks. Columbia.
- j DUMB CLUCK, THE (Oswald Cartoon)—Fun with an elephant and a home-made fire truck. Universal.
- fj FOWL PLAY (Popeye Cartoon) — Popeye brings a parrot to Olive Oyl which his rival tries to kill. Paramount.
- fj MYSTERIOUS JUG, THE (Oswald Cartoon)—Oswald and his dog "Doxie" have adventures with a magician.
- fj PIGSKIN PALOOKA, THE—An amusing Our Gang Comedy with Alfalfa as an amateur football hero. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f \*WOODS ARE FULL OF CUCKOOS, THE (Cartoon)—An amusingly clever cartoon in color, burlesquing various radio and screen personalities in a Woodland Swing Broadcast. Vitaphone.

#### MUSICALS, NOVELTIES AND SERIALS

- f GIVE TILL IT HURTS (Crime Doesn't Pay Series)—About a racket operating under the cloak of a charity drive. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f JAN RUBINI AND HIS ORCHESTRA—A violin player who was given a Stradivarius. Vitaphone.
- fj JUNGLE MENACE (Serial) NOS. 11-14—Starring Frank Buck. More episodes in this interesting serial. Columbia.

- f MUSIC WILL TELL—Racketeers pose as a band leader and his orchestra, but are caught when the real band suddenly appears. RKO Radio.
- fj PLAYING WITH DANGER—(Floyd Gibbons "Your True Adventures" Series)—About five boys caught in a water tank. A real thrill. Vitaphone.
- f SUNDAY NIGHT AT THE TROCADERO—Singing, dancing and celebrities at Hollywood's famous restaurant. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f SWEET SHOE—Rita Rio and her all girl orchestra—Good dancing and music. RKO Radio.
- j TIM TYLER'S LUCK (Serial) NOS. 1-5—Starring Frankie Thomas and Frances Robinson. An exciting story of a youth who goes to the jungle to seek his lost father. The wild animals and the hair-raising escapades of the youth make the picture interesting. Universal.
- j ZORRO RIDES AGAIN (Serial) NOS. 1-5—Starring John Carroll and Helen Christian. Zorro, the mystery man, fights the gang who is trying to get a railroad away from the rightful owners. Republic.

## An Invitation to the Conference

THE annual meeting of the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures will be held in New York City at the Hotel Pennsylvania, January 20th to 22nd. There will be sessions devoted to new film review, to community motion picture organization activities and to junior film activities in which many representatives will take part.

There will be sessions addressed by authoritative speakers on various motion picture subjects and on Saturday, January 22d, the Annual Luncheon will take place. There is no conference fee, the tickets for the luncheon are \$2.00.

All our readers as well as members are invited to this yearly get-together of those interested in the motion picture and its use. Are you coming?

#### NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW

70 Fifth Avenue  
New York City

I am interested in the Conference. ☐

I am planning to come to the Conference. ☐

I wish a luncheon ticket. ☐

NAME .....

AFFILIATION .....

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## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures is a citizen body, organized in 1909 by the People's Institute of New York City as a medium for reflecting intelligent public opinion regarding a growing art and entertainment. This is still the Board's function, together with that of disseminating information on the subject of motion pictures and carrying on a constructive program having to do with community cooperation in the advancement and uses of the motion picture.

The National Board is opposed to legal censorship and is in favor of the community better films plan of placing emphasis upon and building support for the finer and more worthwhile films. It is at all times glad to cooperate with any agency to encourage and guide the motion picture in developing its possibilities both as recreation and as entertainment.

It carries on its work through various committees. All members of the committees serve without pay. No member is connected with the motion picture industry. They are representative of varied interests and activities and many are connected with large public welfare organizations or educational institutions.

The General Committee is a body evolved out of the original group organized in 1909. It is the appeal and central advisory committee of the National Board to which policies are referred and to which decisions of the Review Committee regarding pictures may be carried either by the producers or by the Review Committee itself.

The Executive Committee is composed of members of the General Committee and is the directing body of the National Board, charged with the formulation of policies, the election of members, the expenditure of funds and supervision of all administrative affairs.

The Review Committee is a large group of 300 members carrying on the work of reviewing the films. It is divided into sub-groups which meet for review per schedule during each week in the projection rooms of the various motion picture companies.

The Membership Committee supervises the membership list of the Review Committee and recommends the names of proposed new members for consideration by the Executive Committee.

The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays is composed of critics and students of the cinema interested particularly in encouraging the artistic development of the motion picture. It reviews and publishes a critique of the finest films and assists community groups in the showing of unusual films to special audiences. Its pioneer activity has done much to lay the foundation for the Little Photoplay Theatre movement and to stimulate the organization of subscription groups to develop audiences for the support of the creative achievements of the screen.

## NATIONAL MOTION PICTURE COUNCIL

The community or field work of the National Board of Review is conducted under its National Motion Picture Council, through affiliated membership groups, service contact groups and correspondents throughout the country. The National Council assists in the organization and program of work of local groups which are usually called Councils.

These Councils follow a plan initiated by the National Board in 1916 of having a membership composed of representatives from many organizations, cultural, educational, recreational, religious, and civic, so that they typify the original movement for community participation in the development and best use of the motion picture as recreation and education.

The objectives of such organizations are as follows:

To demonstrate through the education of public opinion, the effectiveness of selection and classification, instead of censorship, as a means of forwarding the development of the motion picture and its best uses.

To encourage through open meetings, forums, classes and other means, the study of the motion picture as a medium of entertainment, education and artistic expression.

To concentrate the attention of the public on specific worthwhile films through the publication of a Photoplay Guide to the selected pictures being currently shown at local theatres.

To arrange family Friday night or week-end programs of selected films, and junior matinees of pictures particularly suited to the tastes of children, through cooperation with local exhibitors.

To endorse and further the use of visual education through motion pictures in the schools.

To arrange and promote occasional exhibitions of exceptional and cultural films that would not normally be shown in the commercial theatres.

### PUBLICATIONS

The National Board of Review and its Council as an aid to the groups carrying out these objectives furnishes an informational service through its publications.

#### National Board of Review Magazine (monthly)

\$2.00 a year for individual subscriptions

\$1.00 a year to Council or club groups

#### Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures

\$2.50 a year when taken alone, available at a special rate of \$1.00 in conjunction with the Magazine.

Selected Pictures Catalog (annual) ..... 25c

Special Film Lists ..... 10c ea.

Such as Selected Films for Children's Showings,  
Selected Book-Films, Educational Films, etc.

National Board of Review—Its Background,  
Growth and Present Status.....free

National Board of Review—How It Works.....free

A Plan and a Program for Community  
Motion Picture Councils ..... 10c



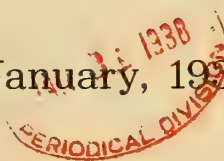
New movies, the

# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

Vol. XIII, No. 1



January, 1938



From "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs"—Clean hands for supper (See page 10)

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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

f BAD MAN OF BRIMSTONE, THE—Wallace Beery, Virginia Bruce. Story by J. Walter Ruben and Maurice Rapf. Directed by J. Walter Ruben. Conventional bad-man theme set in pioneer Arizona with Wallace Beery hiding a soft heart under an outlaw exterior. A good deal of excitement and sentimentality. Acting—generally average. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f BEG BORROW OR STEAL—Frank Morgan, Florence Rice, John Beal. Suggested by story by William C. White. Directed by William Thiele. A genial and often hilarious comedy about an American pretending to own a French chateau for his daughter to be married in—the romantic interest is pleasant and many of the minor characters very funny. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f BUCCANEER, THE—Fredric March, Francisca Gaal. Based on book "Lafitte, the Pirate" by Lyle Saxon. Directed by Cecil B. DeMille. A thrilling story of the adventure of the dashing young pirate, Jean Lafitte and his comrades. Well directed and excellently acted. Paramount.

f CHARLIE CHAN AT MONTE CARLO—Warner Oland. Screen story by Robert Ellis and Helen Logan. Directed by Eugene Forde. A good mystery tale, in which Charlie Chan cooperates with the French police in running an unsuspected murderer to earth. 20th Century-Fox.

f CRASHING HOLLYWOOD—Lee Tracy, Joan Woodbury, Bradley Page. Screen story by Paul Dickey and Mann Page. Directed by Lew Landers. The farcical troubles in a studio resulting from a screen-writer's using the actual experience of an ex-convict for story material. Lively and funny. RKO-Radio.

f DAUGHTER OF SHANGHAI—Anna May Wong, Charles Bickford, Philip Ahn. Screen story by Garnett Weston. Directed by Robert Florey. A Chinese girl, the daughter of a merchant, pursues the murderers of her father, discovers the leader of the gang who are unlawfully importing aliens, and with the help of the G-Men brings them to justice. Paramount.

f GLAMOROUS NIGHT—Mary Ellis, Otto Kruger. Drury Lane Theatre play by Ivor Novello. Directed by Brian Desmond Hurst. A musical romance. The story of a monarchy threatened by a dictatorship and a Gypsy girl who saves both the King and his kingdom. English production. Republic.

f \*HITTING A NEW HIGH—Lily Pons, Jack Oakie, Edward Everett Horton. Screen story by Robert Harari and Maxwell Shane. Directed by Raoul Walsh. A most amusing and entertaining story of how a publicity stunt gives a French cafe singer her chance in opera. Lily Pons' voice is marvelous. Excellent comedy supplied by Jack Oakie and Edward Everett Horton. RKO-Radio.

f KLART' TILL DRABBING (Ready for Action)—Tjor Modeen, Ake Soderblom. Screen story by Weyler Hildebrand. Directed by Edvin Adolphson. An active farce, almost in the Keystone tradition, about the adventures of a couple of sailors ashore. In Swedish, with captions in English. Scandinavian Talking Pictures.

f LOVE AND HISSES—Simone Simon, Ben Bernie, Walter Winchell, Bert Lahr. Screen story by Art Arthur, music and lyrics by Mack Gordon and Harry Revel. Directed by Sidney Lanfield. A fast, jolly and glittering comedy—Bernie and Winchell at their old feud, with new and funny variations, and Simone Simon delightful in a new kind of part. The whole cast helps keep the audience chuckling. 20th Century-Fox.

m MAN-PROOF—Myrna Loy, Franchot Tone, Rosalind Russell, Walter Pidgeon. Magazine story by Fanny Heaslip Lea. Directed by Richard Thorpe. About a girl so much in love with love that she didn't know what man she was in love with. Smartly done, brightly written, and an all-round good cast. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f MURDER ON DIAMOND ROW—Edmund Lowe, Ann Todd. Novel and play by Edgar Wallace. Directed by William K. Howard. A crime thriller. The "Squeaker," a mysterious receiver of stolen goods, is finally captured by Scotland Yard with the help of an ex-detective who is trying to make a "comeback." United Artists.

(Continued on page 9)



# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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January, 1938

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## The Outstanding Films of 1937

THE annual choosing of the "ten best" has been done, by the Committee on Exceptional Photoplays, by the reviewing members of the Board, and by the Young Reviewers and 4-Star Clubs. The most striking thing about the result is the number of films that appear on all three lists, which would appear to indicate that there is no wide gulf between artistic qualities and entertainment qualities (at their best) and far less difference between grown-ups and youngsters in their tastes and appreciations than many people suppose.

The list of American films chosen by the Committee on Exceptional Photoplays, for artistic excellence, is:

*Night Must Fall*  
*The Life of Emile Zola*  
*Black Legion*  
*Camille*  
*Make Way for Tomorrow*  
*The Good Earth*  
*They Won't Forget*  
*Captains Courageous*  
*A Star is Born*  
*Stage Door*

The order of the listing was determined by counting the points due to each film by its position on the individual lists of the different members of the committee. In several cases these points were so close in number that a very slight difference in preference would have made a different order—in other words, any one of three films might have appeared in third place, for instance, so nearly identical were the number of votes they received.

NIGHT MUST FALL. This film appears only on the list chosen by the Exceptional Committee, and while it was not the first choice of every member, it was so near the top on so many individual lists that its final total of points was so far ahead of that given to any other film that it became the incontestable choice as the best film of the year. That it was overlooked by other "choosers" is probably because it was remembered chiefly as a mere murder tale, so expert as just a murder tale that people overlooked how much else it was: how truthfully its motivations and interrelations of characters were understood and depicted, how firmly grounded, psychologically and sociologically, were all the elements that made it what it was. In sum, how profoundly searching it was beneath its surface of exciting events, a real tragedy, in the classic sense, in the garb of a contemporary news-story. In addition to the depth and importance of the film's content, its execution was practically faultless, nothing there one would have preferred left out, nothing left out that one missed—a rarely satisfying combination of excellent writing, setting, directing and acting. (*Produced by Hunt Stromberg for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, written by Emlyn Williams, directed by Richard Thorpe, principally acted by Robert Montgomery, Dame May Whitty and Rosalind Russell.*)

THE LIFE OF EMILE ZOLA. An important and effective experiment in screen biography. After a somewhat conventional handling of a tremendously difficult begin-



*Robert Montgomery and Rosalind Russell in "Night Must Fall," chosen as the best film of 1937 by the Committee on Exceptional Photoplays.*



ning (how Zola became the writer that he was) it swings into the Dreyfus case and becomes dramatic and moving on a heroic scale, a superb illustration of civilization's chief article of faith, that "truth is on the march, and nothing can stop her." (*Produced by Warner Bros., written by Norman Reilly Raine, Heinz Herald and Geza Herczeg, directed by William Dieterle, principally acted by Paul Muni and Joseph Schildkraut.*)

**BLACK LEGION.** A powerful proof that problems of contemporary American life make excellent screen drama, a story of mob terrorization, operating in masks and darkness, done with the effectiveness such a story deserves. A good film and a courageous one. (*Produced by Warner Bros., adapted by Abem Finkel and William Wister from a story by Robert Lord, directed by Archie Mayo, principally acted by Humphrey Bogart, Erin O'Brien-Moore, Dick Foran, Helen Flint, Joseph Sawyer and Robert Barrat.*)

**CAMILLE.** This perennial relic of the theatre was given an astonishing rebirth in style and feeling by excellent re-writing and direction, and was illuminated by a superbly beautiful and poignant performance of the lovely Lady of the Camellias by Greta Garbo. (*Produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, adapted by Zoe Akins, Frances Marion and James Hilton from Alexander Dumas' play, directed by George Cukor, principally acted by Greta Garbo, Robert Taylor, Henry Daniell, Lionel Barrymore and Lenore Ulric.*)

**MAKE WAY FOR TOMORROW.** A deeply moving story of the pathos of advancing age and the often tragic gulf that exists between the different generations of a family. Honestly conceived and brilliantly acted. (*Produced by Paramount, written by Vina Delmar from Josephine Lawrence's novel, "Years Are So Long," directed by Leo McCarey, principally acted by Victor Moore, Beulah Bondi, Fay Bainter and Thomas Mitchell.*)

**THE GOOD EARTH.** Pearl Buck's novel of peasant life in China compressed with remarkable skill into the dimensions of a screen play, with remarkably effective backgrounds and mass movements and a fine performance by Luise Rainer. (*Pro-*

*duced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, adapted by Talbot Jennings, Tess Schlesinger and Claudine West, directed by Sidney Franklin, principally acted by Paul Muni, Luise Rainer, Walter Connolly and Tilly Losch.*)

**THEY WON'T FORGET.** A fine dramatization of a case of sectional prejudice and personal ambition operating tragically against justice and inducing lynch law. Vigorous and hard-hitting. (*Produced by Warner Bros., written by Robert Rossen and Aben Kandel from Ward Greene's novel, "Death in the Deep South," directed by Mervyn LeRoy, principally acted by Claude Rains, Edward Norris, Gloria Dickson and Otto Kruger.*)

**CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS.** Kipling's story of the Gloucester fishing fleet handsomely produced against a sea background, with some fine acting by Spencer Tracy and Freddie Bartholomew. (*Produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, adapted by John Lee Mahin, Marc Connolly and Dale Van Every, directed by Victor Fleming, principally acted by Freddie Bartholomew, Spencer Tracy, Lionel Barrymore and Mickey Rooney.*)

**A STAR IS BORN.** The best story so far about Hollywood, done effectively in the best of Technicolor, written with wit and insight and finely acted. (*Produced by Selznick-International, written by William Wellman, Robert Carson, Dorothy Parker and Alan Campbell, directed by William Wellman, principally acted by Janet Gaynor, Fredric March, Adolphe Menjou and Lionel Stander.*)

**STAGE DOOR.** A warmly human story of girls in a theatrical boarding-house, exceptionally directed by Gregory LaCava and remarkable for fine performances by a whole group of young actresses. (*Produced by RKO-Radio, adapted by Morrie Ryskind and Anthony Vellier from Edna Ferber and George Kaufman's play, directed by Gregory LaCava and principally acted by Katharine Hepburn, Ginger Rogers, Andrea Leeds, Constance Collier and Adolphe Menjou.*)

Of the foreign films seen by the Committee on Exceptional Photoplays, the following ten were selected as the best:

**THE ETERNAL MASK.** A brilliantly successful study in Freudian psychology, wisely concerned with a case that could be

brought to the screen without too much emphasis on undiscussable elements, and condensing a case history within the framework of a film-play without too violent a strain upon credibility. Superbly acted and directed. (*Produced by Progress Films, Berne, Switzerland, adapted by Leo Lapaire from his novel, directed by Werner Hochbaum, principally acted by Mathias Wieman, Olga Tschechova, Peter Peterson and Tom Kraa. Distributed in U. S. by Arthur Mayer and Joseph Burstyn.*)

**THE LOWER DEPTHS.** Gorki's classic of the submerged poor in Russia, brought to the screen with warm sympathy and understanding, and without the utter hopelessness and complete despair of its original. (*Produced in France by Albatros, screen play by E. Zamiatine and J. Companeex, directed by Jean Renoir, principally acted by Jean Gabin, Louis Jouvet, Suzy Prim and Jany Holt. Distributed in U. S. by Arthur Mayer and Joseph Burstyn.*)

**BALTIC DEPUTY.** Another of the fine pictures of the Russian revolution, concerned with the case of a scientist and intellectual working with the cause. Remarkable for the magnificent acting of Nikolai Cherkassov. (*Produced by Lenfilm, directed by Alexander Zarkhi and Joseph Heifetz, principally acted by Nikolai Cherkassov and Marta Domasheva. Distributed by Amkino.*)

**MAYERLING.** A glamorous and effective version of the tragedy of Rudolph, the ill-starred son of Austria's emperor, with a shining performance by Danielle Darrieux. (*Produced by Nero Film, adapted by Joseph Kessel and J. C. Cube from Claude Anet's novel "Idyl's End," directed by Anatole Litvak, principally acted by Charles Boyer and Danielle Darrieux. Distributed by Pax Films.*)

**THE SPANISH EARTH.** Joris Ivens' superb pictorial sketches of the war in Spain, eloquent with passionate sympathy and feeling. Ernest Hemenway provided a fine and vigorous commentary in behalf of the Spanish Loyalists. (*Made in Spain by Joris Ivens.*)

**GOLGOTHA.** A fine presentation, pictorially and cinematically, of the Passion of Christ. (*Produced and directed by Julian Duvivier, principally acted by Robert*

*Le Vigan, Jean Gabin and Harry Bauer. Distributed by Golgotha Corporation.*)

**ELEPHANT BOY.** Robert Flaherty's beautiful picture of the Indian jungle, adapted from a story in Kipling's "Jungle Books." An Indian boy named Sabu and a magnificent elephant are the principle actors. (*Produced by London Films, adapted by John Collier from Rudyard Kipling's "Toomai of the Elephants," directed by Robert Flaherty and Zoltan Korda, distributed by United Artists.*)

**REMBRANDT.** One of the most successful attempts to screen the life of a creative artist, full of color and with a fine performance by Charles Laughton. (*Produced by London Films, written by Carl Zuckmayer, directed by Alexander Korda, principally acted by Charles Laughton, Gertrude Lawrence, Elsa Lanchester. Distributed by United Artists.*)

**JANOSIK.** A folk tale of Czechoslovakia, the legend of a national hero reproduced with colorful vigor. (*Produced by Lloyd Films, written by J. Mahlen, directed by Mac Eric, principally acted by Palo Bielik and Zlata Hajdukova. Distributed in U. S. by French Motion Picture Corporation.*)

**THE WEDDING OF PALO.** A worthy companion piece of *Nanook of the North*, a fine and sympathetic picture of Eskimo life. (*Written and produced in Greenland by Dr. Knud Rasmussen, distributed by J. H. Hoffberg Co.*)

The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays for the first time made a selection of superior performances by actors and actresses, limiting their choice to twelve outstanding portrayals. They were, in alphabetical order:

Harry Bauer in *The Golem*  
 Humphrey Bogart in *Black Legion*  
 Charles Boyer in *Conquest*  
 Nikolai Cherkassov in *Baltic Deputy*  
 Danielle Darrieux in *Mayerling*  
 Greta Garbo in *Camille*  
 Robert Montgomery in *Night Must Fall*  
 Maria Ouspenskaya in *Conquest*  
 Luise Rainer in *The Good Earth*  
 Joseph Schildkraut in *The Life of Emile Zola*  
 Mathias Wieman in *The Eternal Mask*  
 Dame May Whitty in *Night Must Fall*



Other actors who might have received mention if the list had been longer were Spencer Tracy in *Captains Courageous*, Jackie Cooper in *Boy of the Streets*, Paul Muni in *The Life of Emile Zola*, Katherine Hepburn and Ginger Rogers in *Stage Door*, Jean Gabin and Louis Javert in *The Lower Depths*.

The members of the Review Committee, basing their choices on popular appeal, selected the following as their ten best films of the year:

*The Good Earth*  
*The Life of Emile Zola*  
*Dead End*  
*Conquest*  
*Lost Horizon*  
*A Star is Born*  
*The Prisoner of Zenda*  
*Stage Door*  
*Captains Courageous*  
*Camille*

The Young Reviewers and the nation-wide 4-Star Clubs, numbering over three hundred and fifty boys and girls, made the following selections as their ten favorite films:

*The Good Earth*  
*Dead End*  
*Captains Courageous*  
*Lost Horizon*  
*The Life of Emile Zola*  
*The Prisoner of Zenda*  
*A Star is Born*  
*Stage Door*  
*The Plainsman*  
*Stella Dallas*

It is interesting to consider the division of votes according to age and sex, and the following tables may be surprising.

BOYS (9-13 years)      GIRLS (9-13 years)

<i>The Good Earth</i>	<i>Life of Emile Zola</i>
<i>Dead End</i>	<i>Lost Horizon</i>
<i>Captains Courageous</i>	<i>The Good Earth</i>
<i>Prisoner of Zenda</i>	<i>Dead End</i>
<i>The Road Back</i>	<i>Prisoner of Zenda</i>
<i>Life of Emile Zola</i>	<i>Captains Courageous</i>
<i>Prince &amp; the Pauper</i>	<i>A Star is Born</i>
<i>The Plainsman</i>	<i>Prince &amp; the Pauper</i>
<i>Lost Horizon</i>	<i>Thin Ice</i>
<i>A Star is Born</i>	<i>Stage Door</i>

BOYS (14-17 years)      GIRLS (14-17 years)

<i>The Good Earth</i>	<i>The Good Earth</i>
<i>Captains Courageous</i>	<i>Captains Courageous</i>

<i>Dead End</i>	<i>Dead End</i>
<i>Lost Horizon</i>	<i>Lost Horizon</i>
<i>Life of Emile Zola</i>	<i>Prisoner of Zenda</i>
<i>Prisoner of Zenda</i>	<i>A Star is Born</i>
<i>Souls at Sea</i>	<i>Life of Emile Zola</i>
<i>Stage Door</i>	<i>Stella Dallas</i>
<i>A Star is Born</i>	<i>Stage Door</i>
<i>Stella Dallas</i>	<i>Maytime</i>

## We Make the Movies

Edited by NANCY NAUMBURG

This is not the first book of its kind, but it is easily the most thorough-going and most interesting for American readers. It really gets into the inner workings of movie-making in Hollywood, with plenty of reference to familiar names and pictures to satisfy "fan" curiosity without the silliness and superficiality of most of the stuff that is written for movie fans. Its information is all relevant and reliable, presented with dignity and without stodginess.

Miss Naumburg writes a sensible introduction for the articles she has assembled from men and women engaged in making movies who are important in their jobs and know how to describe and explain their jobs effectively. Such well-known people as Jesse L. Lasky, Sidney Howard, John Cromwell, Bette Davis, Paul Muni and Walt Disney tell about their special professions, while equally indispensable but less publicized people cover with fascinating detail such work as set-designing, casting, photography, sound-recording, film-cutting and the making of musical scores.

A clear exposition of these latter, more technical, parts of movie-making is interesting for everybody, and really valuable for anyone who is going to try to break into the movies. Of even more value to such a person is the eminently informative article on movie stories by Samuel Marx. Sidney Howard and Paul Muni, being so eminent in their specialties that they are peculiarly privileged to be independent, are perhaps not thoroughly typical of writers and actors, but that does not lessen the point of the things they have to say.

Now that we have this book, it would be equally interesting, though perhaps not to so many people, to have an equally frank and

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## Colleges and the Motion Picture

WHAT are the universities and colleges doing about and with the motion picture is a question often asked us. We will answer it by giving through these columns, from time to time, excerpts from letters which comes to us from faculty and student members in regard to their specific motion picture interest. Thus you will see that the colleges are interested in the study and use of the motion picture as graduate thesis material, in English and Foreign Language Courses, in Public Opinion and Dramatic Courses and in Visual Education and Teacher Training courses.

Each of the following paragraphs reports on some such motion picture use.

"There is in the Department of English Literature of Wellesley College, a course in Modern Drama, during the second semester of which (dealing with the post war period) certain attention is paid to the essential differences in idiom between the stage and the film. No direct historical or technical study of the movies as a distinct art form is included in this course, or in any other course in the College curriculum, nor is it likely that any such study will be included at an early date. Each year specially equipped students are permitted to undertake distinctive investigations of aspects of the movies, and these essays receive college credit. . . . We are, however, greatly strengthening the College Library's collections of critical writing pertaining to the film art and industry against the time when, in our opinion, the art of the cinema will justify more intensive study on a level with the study of drama, poetry, painting, music and the other arts."

"Northwestern University plans to use moving pictures more extensively in education in the future. At the present time movies are used primarily in the School of Medicine, Science Department and in Psychology. These pictures are being employed primarily for class room use."

"George Washington University is offering a course in Creative Writing for scenarios. Also, for a while we were developing a technic for the use of motion pictures in the teaching of surgery."

"The motion picture interest at Grinnell College has been two-fold. We have a number of motion pictures taken of activities on the campus and have shown these rather widely to alumni groups and at high schools. Our Department of Romance Languages has also been active in recent years in securing French films which have been shown in one of the local movie theatres with an almost unanimous attendance of our student body. We are looking forward to a larger use of films in our educational work and have already had some good results from the use of material of this sort."

"The University of Kentucky makes extensive use of the following visual aids in class room teaching; excursions, object-specimen-model material, stereoscopes, opaque projectors, glass slides, film slides, and motion pictures, both sound and silent. . . . For some time many of our instructors have used motion pictures in teaching. Some have made their own films and used their own projectors. However, a campus-wide motion picture service was not established until the second semester of last year, 1936. Since that time there have been 348 reels shown in class room instruction to a total audience of 4826. The motion picture service is carried on through the Department of University Extension."

"The significance of the motion picture in modern life is not taught as a separate course in Bennington College. The motion picture, like all other media of communication, is considered in various social studies courses which deal with institutions and behavior. I believe the Drama Division had at one time a voluntary discussion club to consider photoplays from a critical viewpoint. In connection with this club and later through the efforts of individual members of the faculty, we occasionally get selected foreign films and documentary films for special showing at the local community theatre. The usual use of motion pictures in Science and in Child Development is followed when this technique is relevant. The student Recreational Council is bringing some of the Modern Museum Collection of films on the



history of motion pictures for recreational showing."

"State Teachers College of Moorhead, Minnesota, in its Department of Education and Psychology offers courses once or twice a year on Visual Education and has been offering such courses for about eight years. They cover all types of Visual Aid including motion pictures. We teach the philosophy and technique of using the same. Much use is made of demonstration and actual practice.

"Public school officials and teachers throughout the Nation making a study of the use of visual aids as a part of the regular school equipment for instructional purposes are beginning to realize the great value of motion pictures and other visual aids in carrying out their regular school programs. In an effort to secure the necessary materials, they are appealing to the extension divisions of state universities. Louisiana State University and Agriculture and Mechanical College Extension is making an effort to meet their demands. This is why the universities are now organizing and operating visual educational bureaus. It seems to me that the production of educational pictures is a new field with great possibilities. I believe if such reels could be produced at a reasonable price and in sufficient quantities to cover all the fields of the elementary and high school programs of instruction, a company organized and developed for this work would do a tremendous business. It would require the planning of educational experts and motion picture producers to organize the subject matter and produce the pictures. However, if the cost were not too great, I think that they would be well rewarded for their efforts."

A student of Hartford Seminary Foundation writes of a study of movies, which is being made at this time, in connection with a course in leisure time activities.

The University of Denver, Department of Speech, is offering a course in Motion Picture Appreciation.

The Director of the Lee School of Journalism, Washington and Lee University, writes: "We are interested in the motion picture from several points of view. We study it as one of the channels of communication in a course in Public Opinion. We

also consider the motion picture from the aesthetic-expressive point of view in connection with our course in Critical Writing.

"Let me thank you on behalf of Thiel College for your fine cooperation in furnishing material for our exhibit for the Fourth Institute of Parenthood and Home Relations which was held here on November 4 and 5. We find that the people who come to this Institute are eager to see the books and other materials which are being published in this field."

"We are holding under the University of South Carolina Extension Service a meeting of principals, superintendents, college presidents, and deans, and interested citizens of South Carolina, for a conference on visual education on Dec. 10 and 11."

(Continued from page 7)

enlightening book called "We Sell the Movies." The public, if it were willing, could learn a lot from such a book.—J.S.H.  
W. W. Norton & Co., \$3.00

(Continued from page 2)

- f \*ROSALIE—Nelson Eddy, Eleanor Powell, Frank Morgan. Musical play by Anthony McGuire and Guy Bolton. Directed by W. S. Van Dyke II. A Ziegfeldian show with new tunes by Cole Porter, an elaborate series of big specialty numbers grouped around a usual kind of musical-show romance between a West Point cadet and a Balkan princess. Short on comedy but long on production values. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj SERGEANT MURPHY — Ronald Regan, Mary Maguire. Story by Cy Bartlett. Directed by B. Reeves Eason. A pleasant, juvenile sort of story about an army horse that became a champion jumper. Warner Bros.
- f SHE MARRIED AN ARTIST—Luli Deste, John Boles. Screen story by Avery Strakosch. Directed by Marion Gering. A comedy romance. The difficulties that arise when a temperamental French dress designer marries an American artist. The entire cast is good and the story is light and amusing. Luli Deste, Columbia's new French importation is charming and natural. Columbia.
- f SHE'S GOT EVERYTHING—Gene Raymond, Ann Southern. Screen story by Joseph Hoffman and Monroe Shaff. Directed by Joseph Santley. A light and amusing story of a girl who is framed by her creditors to marry her wealthy boss in order

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## EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS DEPARTMENT

*This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of Exceptional and Honorable*

*Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.*

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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## Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

*Produced by Walt Disney. Supervising director, David Hand, sequence directors Perce Pearce, Larry Morey, William Cottrell, Wilfred Jackson, Ben Sharpsteen. Supervising animators, Hamilton Luske, Vladimir Tytla, Fred Moore, Norman Ferguson. Story adaptation, Ted Sears, Otto Englander, Earl Hurd, Dorothy Ann Blank, Richard Creedon, Dick Rickard, Merrill De Maris, Webb Smith. Music, Frank Churchill, Leigh Harline, Paul Smith. Distributed by RKO Radio.*

IT is so easy to take *Snow White* as a natural culmination of all that Walt Disney has done before, and bring out all the superlatives to express delight in it, that one might overlook the most important fact about it aside from its being the first feature-length cartoon: that it is a landmark, of a significance hardly to be calculated, in the development of the motion picture. That is not to say that animated cartoons (a term hitherto used for the mechanics Disney uses, but totally inadequate as description) are likely ever to supersede the use of human actors on the screen; but *Snow White* definitely proves that there is a field in which hand-drawn and hand-colored pictures, employed in the Disney way, are as much more effective than the usual fashion of catching human beings against solid sets and backgrounds with a movie camera, as a painting is more effective than a photograph. The screen has not yet seen a better medium for translating certain creations of fantasy and imagination into visual images than the Disney drawings, and no photographing of actuality could come within leagues of being so vivid, both in

what it shows and what it suggests, as (for one out of innumerable instances in this film) the flight of the wicked queen from the pursuing dwarfs, with the flesh-hungry vultures perched on the ominous tree-branch overhead.

What Walt Disney himself, or others following in the way he has opened, may do hereafter in this medium is for the future to disclose. For the present it is joy enough to have *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, such a fairy-tale as the child in man has never had to delight in before. From the first glimpse of the castle where the jealous queen keeps the lovely Snow White in rags and drudgery to the last glimpse of the Prince carrying the Princess away on his white steed, it creates a world of charming unreality, peopled with lovable wild creatures of the forest, with the even more lovable and amusing dwarfs, and such human beings as never lived outside the pages of a picture book.

The outline of the Grimm tale has been followed quite faithfully, except for a more romantic ending in which the Princess is awakened from her Sleeping Death by the Prince's kiss. But upon it has been hung a vast richness of detail of the kind only Walt Disney has ever put into pictures. The little wood animals and the birds that befriended Snow White, created with an affectionate, gently amusing touch that must surely make everyone who sees them feel kindlier to wild creatures—the seven dwarfs, each one so much an individual with engaging traits of his own that it is hard not to pick a favorite and hard to pick one: Dopey, Bashful, Grumpy—which? All the life in the little house—the house-cleaning, the





*The birds trying to defend Snow White from the wicked Queen, disguised as an apple-woman.*

washing of the dwarfs for supper, most of all the dancing party—is enchanting. And to keep the drama alive, with a note of suspense always in the air, there is the queen, so wicked that the rats in the dungeon flee from her and her grimly evil raven shrinks in horror from her, plotting to kill the maiden her magic mirror tells her is more fair than she.

The thing that might have been most feared is that human beings and human voices would not come through the animation process happily. The nearer to living persons they had to be the less convincing they might have turned out. Animals and dwarfs could be unnaturalistic and still be quaint and attractive. In fact, it is only when the dwarfs talk together in comedian fashion (resemblances in speech to some

screen comics will be caught) that they are least interesting. Snow White herself, mostly through the grace of her movements, manages to escape almost completely the effect of being just a flat line-drawing trying to be a photograph, and the Queen turns out to be a personality that no actress could by any of her arts embody.

It is astonishing how these pictures create a life in a world of their own, totally unreal in fact but absorbingly real to the entranced imagination. It is a pity that the film on which so much beauty and fine feeling exist should ever perish, for it is hard not to believe that it would delight generation after generation, as long as fairy-tale glamor and kindly humor and the myths of dwarfs and animals have the power to charm.—J.S.H.

# A Theatre Councilor for the Children

By ADELINE EHRIK

*Last month there was presented in this Magazine comment upon the regulation now in effect in New York City regarding the admission of unaccompanied children under 16 to motion picture theatres, with the promise, since the attendance of children at the movies is a subject of interest to so many people, of further comment to follow. Here Mrs. Ehrig gives her experience as matron, or councilor—a more appropriate titling for the position this story shows—in a theatre in Long Island, nearby New York City.*

IT'S knowing when to keep Johnny Green at the theatre, and when to send him home, that keeps me on my toes as councilor at Skouras' Forest Hills Theatre.

Sometimes Johnny has a dental appointment, though he's forgotten to tell me about it. And sometimes, when he's seen the entire show, and I finally send him home because it's past his dinner time, I get a call from Mother (just getting home from her weekly bridge!) who says he arrived too early.

At that, it's the kind of a complaint we like. It keeps us in touch with Johnny's mother, who has already begun to think of our theatre as her neighborhood playhouse.

A councilor's job is a two-fold one. All the Skouras theatres employ women in this capacity, among whom are club women, teachers, and nurses. They are women known in the community, able wisely to supervise children and also able to contact community organizations.

In our theatre, according to the regulation, we have a section reserved especially for children, where they are permitted to come unaccompanied by an adult. From the time of their arrival I, as councilor, have full charge of them. I see that they remove their wraps, and are comfortably seated for the run of the picture. During this period of time, I patrol the aisles, try to keep alert to any possible disturbance and generally attend to their needs. And any mother who wishes her child to leave the theatre at a certain time has only to get word to me and I see that the boy or girl leaves promptly.

The hostess of our theatre is also licensed, so that, at any time when it is necessary for me to be on the job at some outside meeting,

she is qualified to look after the children. This means that at no time are they left unattended.

When I first took up this work, the local newspaper printed an article (not interviewing me) titled "Adults Worse than Children." At first I doubted the wisdom of printing such an article. Would the adults respond to this by staying away from the theatre entirely, I wondered? Before long I was very glad it had been printed.

The difficulty had been that the adults wanted to sit in the children's section, not because they could see or hear any better there, but because they had sat in that section for years. Some, perhaps, didn't like children, many of them had none. In an effort to please them, we moved the children's section from one side to the other. Now an understanding has been reached. Our patrons are used to the children's section. They accept it and really like the idea. They know, too, that our staff will gladly give them a choice of seats away from this section if desired.

Since I took up this work in the theatre, the Forest Hills-Kew Gardens Motion Picture Council has been formed, made up of members who are motion picture chairmen of various local groups. They meet every three weeks, alternating at the theatres in the two communities. As program chairman of this council, I have been able to contact interesting speakers who have helped to stimulate interest in the study of motion pictures. At these meetings I am permitted to bring the news of our theatre to the members, and at the same time I welcome helpful suggestions.

I am a member of the Forest Hills Women's Club, on the motion picture committee, and as such, was asked to invite my manager to speak at one of their meetings. I, too, was asked to talk on the work we are trying to do in the theatre.

In my profession as nurse, prior to taking up my duties as councilor, I had been asked to be chairman of First Aid at the State Convention of Women's Clubs, at that time



about to convene. My manager allowed me the necessary time and the results have been far reaching.

A girl scout captain, hearing of my appointment, asked me if I would give her troop a course in First Aid. I had been wanting to get better acquainted with the children and immediately seeing this as an opportunity to do so, I accepted. Before long, I had four troops. Then I found out they needed captains, so I took the captain's course, which took a morning once a week for eight weeks.

I am now on the district board. I have assisted with other troops and now have my own troop, a group of older girls who meet at night. Needless to say, at every meeting, we get into a huddle and discuss the theatre.

I am also a member of the Square Duplicate Bridge Club, organized to raise money for Girl Scout camps, another helpful contact.

On the job as councilor, I have been able to get many interesting displays for our mezzanine and lobby, one outstanding one from a well known portrait artist who lives in the community. The schools and library have cooperated in featuring displays obtained from motion picture producers on our coming attractions.

We have given previews, occasions involving the sending out of a thousand invitations to club women, teachers and different heads of organizations.

I try never to disappoint the children or, for that matter, their parents. Sometimes it is unavoidable, as for instance when Mrs. Smith calls up and asks me to send her Bobby home at once. Who is Bobby, I make the mistake of asking. Why, Bobby's the little boy in the brown coat and hat, sitting next to the little girl in the blue tam. Of course Bobby isn't wearing his brown coat and hat in the theatre, nor is the little girl wearing her blue tam. Yet, somehow, I must find him, for already Mrs. Smith has run off, confident that I will.

The children themselves are attentive and cooperative, and they have definite ideas about movies. They don't like "silly love making scenes." They gather around me during the showing of a mystery picture and

always want to know, most audibly, "what is going to happen now."

They invite me to their birthday parties and bring me gum and candy. On a very hot afternoon last summer a boy, going out of the theatre, ran up to me and handed me a dime. "Get yourself a double header with jiggers (chocolate sprinkles) on it," he said.

They are informal with me to the point of embarrassment. The following incident occurred during the showing of *Lloyds of London* at our theatre and proved most amusing. A small child, we'll call him Jimmy, came to the theatre with his dad. He stopped, in the lobby, to ask me if there was any war in the film. In a preoccupied way I answered, "yes," remembering vaguely the short war scene on the ship towards the end of the picture. I promptly forgot the incident, but Jimmy who was waiting for the war, did not. Later, as I was patrolling the aisle during a tense scene, Jimmy's voice, coming from the center of the theatre, pierced the still silence of the auditorium: "Hey," he cried, "where's the war?"

But they are my pals. They send me Valentines and Christmas cards and write to me when they go on vacation. They show me their art work, their report cards and their home work. And I love it!

*More comment on this subject appears on the following page.*

## How to Use the Educational Sound Film

By M. R. BRUNSTETTER

D. R. Brunstetter from his experience with the making and use of sound films, as Research Associate of Erpi Picture Consultants, writes here a text to aid schools in the introduction of sound films in the curriculum so that a wasteful period of experimentation can be avoided. He tells of the sound film materials of instruction, the teaching purposes for which they can be used and how they can be used, with a special chapter on training teachers in this use. This book can be suggested for guidance not only to school officials but also to motion picture study groups wishing to be informed about the subject of teaching films. *The University of Chicago Press. Price \$2.00*

# Movies and Matrons - The Parents' Angle

MRS. LLOYD A. RIDER

*Mrs. Rider writes of the matron law not as an individual parent who has watched its observance in a neighborhood theatre in relation to her own children, but as one who has studied it in many theatres, as chairman of the Motion Picture Committee of the United Parents Associations of New York City.*

IT is manifestly impossible for any one person or group of persons to speak with authority for the parents of so great a city as New York. Parents, we must remember, have representatives in every economic, social, and educational level, and their opinions, reactions, and interests vary accordingly. The fact that children from six to sixteen may enter motion picture houses unaccompanied and may remain for the program under protection and supervision, has different meanings for different sets of parents. Also, we must keep in mind that this law was passed to do away with the vicious practice of young children asking chance adults to purchase tickets and take them into the theaters, and that the parents who gave these children dimes and quarters to go to the movies are responsible for the law.

Not in all cases is the mother who does this careless or unmindful of her duties as a mother. In the poorer sections of the city, home has little space for children and often there is no nearby playground or neighborhood recreation hall. If the child plays in the street there is danger of accident, a constant worry in the mind of the mother. It is no wonder that even in the days before theaters had matrons, sending the child to the movies seemed a solution to the problem of Saturday afternoon. There was risk, she knew, but then every child who lives in a great city runs some risk when he goes out alone and that risk increases in inverse ratio with the family income. To such parents the matron in the theater is an unmixed blessing and they say so freely.

The careless parent, who from established habit parks her children on her bridge afternoon for long hours at the neighborhood movie house, expresses great approval of

the Matron's law. In former years she was undeterred by the fact that there was no definite person directly responsible for the care of the children, but she does feel better that now there is someone in charge. From such parents the law receives enthusiastic recommendation.

In the meanwhile thoughtful parents are studying the working out of the law with much interest and with an eye to future improvement. A quiet survey made last winter in parts of all the boroughs of the city was most revealing. Too often the satisfactory administration of this law depends upon the manager of the individual theater. If the manager is determined to adhere to the spirit of the law, which is to insure adequate care for the children who enter unaccompanied, he will provide sufficient seating accommodations in reasonable reach of exits and a competent woman to have oversight of the children. When his allotted space is filled, he sells no more tickets to the children. On Saturdays and holidays he is apt to provide extra entertainment suitable for his younger clientele.

On the other hand, if the manager feels restive under the extra expenses of the law, he may provide too few seats for the children, hire an incompetent matron, not the type to care for children, have children standing or sitting two in one seat, etc. Parents and children agree that this administration of the law is not satisfactory.

Even under careful management there are loopholes which thoughtful parents are watching. The law reads "six to sixteen". A child of six is often too immature to see many of the gripping pictures of today without an interpreter near, an older brother or sister or some adult whom he knows. Perhaps the age might be increased two years.

Also, as the law does not explicitly forbid it, the eight year old is apt to bring along his five year old brother and perhaps his tiny chum. If these younger children are allowed in in any numbers they greatly increase the danger in case of fire or panic. School



children are accustomed to fire drills and alarms, and would march out in an orderly manner, but this is not so with the pre-school child. The law needs clarification on this point.

These thoughtful parents also realize that the segregation of children may be a factor in the spread of disease, especially in the early stages of an epidemic. Thus far no data has been gathered as to whether there has been any increase of colds and winter respiratory diseases since the introduction of the law.

After all, eighteen months is not long enough for proper experimentation. What we have now we believe is an improvement over the old regime. What we will have five years from now, we hope and believe will be better.

*(Continued from page 9)*

to pay them off. Victor Moore and Helen Broderick supply the comedy. RKO-Radio.

fj SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS—See Exceptional Photoplays Department, page 10.

f THANK YOU, MR. MOTO—Peter Lorre. Based on story by John P. Marquand. Directed by Norman Foster. A melodrama of the Orient. Some American gangsters are determined to find Genghis Khan's buried treasure, and the Chinese are just as determined not to reveal the hiding place. 20th Century-Fox.

f \*TOVARICH—Charles Boyer, Claudette Colbert, Basil Rathbone. Play by Jacques Deval. Directed by Anatole Litvak. An unusual comedy about a Russian Grand Duchess and the Prince, her husband, exiled in Paris and taking jobs as butler and maid in a banker's house. It has undercurrents of revolutionary politics which give a certain depth to the characters, but it is far more entertaining than controversial. Fine production. Warner Bros.

f UNDER SUSPICION—Jack Holt, Katherine DeMille. Liberty Magazine story by Philip Wylie. Directed by Lewis Collins. A story of a man who plays private detective to discover which of several people wants to kill him. He invites them to his lodge and finally catches the would-be-killer. Suspense is held throughout the picture. Columbia.

f \*WELLS FARGO—Joel McCrea, Frances Dee. Screen story by Stuart N. Lake. Directed by Frank Lloyd. An interesting picture of pioneer days in the West. It concerns the adventures of Ramsay MacKay, agent for the Wells Fargo, who in the face of danger extends the express service over-

land to San Francisco. Excellently directed and well acted. Paramount.

fj WILD HORSE RODEO—Bob Livingston, Ray Corrigan, Max Terhune. Screen story by Gilbert Wright and Oliver Drake. Directed by George Sherman. The story of a wild horse who is captured for a rodeo, but is set free again by the man who wins him as a prize. The horses are lovely and the photography excellent. Republic.

f WISE GIRL—Miriam Hopkins, Ray Milland. Screen story by Allan Scott and Charles Norman. Directed by Leigh Jason. A comedy romance. A wealthy girl goes to live among the Bohemians of Greenwich Village in order to get custody of her dead sister's two girls. Romance develops between her and the children's guardian. RKO-Radio.

f YOU'RE A SWEETHEART—Alice Faye, George Murphy. Screen story by Maxwell Shane and Warren Wilson. Directed by David Butler. A lavish musical show with good comedy and excellent musical numbers. The plot what little there is, deals with putting over a publicity stunt to make a show a sure fire success. Universal.

f YOU'RE ONLY YOUNG ONCE—Lewis Stone, Cecilia Parker, Fay Holden. Screen play by Kay Van Riper, based upon characters created by Auranía Rouverol. Directed by George B. Seitz. Romantic-comedy of a family who take a far-off vacation and learn about life and the path to happiness. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

## SHORT SUBJECTS

f ACCENT ON BEAUTY—Showing the preparations for the making of cosmetics and perfume. Paramount.

fj CITY OF THE GOLDEN GATE—Interesting color scenes of San Francisco, with a lot of statistics. Columbia.

fj \*FILMING NATURE'S WONDERS (Adventures of a Newsreel Cameraman)—A remarkably interesting series of pictures of strange natural phenomena. 20th Century-Fox.

m GOING PLACES NO. 44 (Lowell Thomas)—Mystery of the Yacht Yankee, a visit to the Galapagos, for Milady—showing how beautiful silver foxes are raised and killed to provide furs for the vanity of women—a particularly unpleasant note in an otherwise pleasing picture. Universal.

fj GREY OWL'S LITTLE BROTHER (Treasure Chest Series)—Delightful and instructive tale of a beaver's busy labors, and his friendship with his Indian protector. Educational.

f I HAMA (In Port)—About Gothenburg. Scandinavian Talking Pictures.

f ITALIAN LIBYA—An interesting pictorial report on the scene of Italy's expansion in Africa. 20th Century-Fox.

f LAND OF THE KANGAROO—Beautiful Australia in color. Vitaphone.

f LAND OF THE MAPLE LEAF, THE (Magic Carpet Series)—Fine scenes of Canada—its cities, mountains and lakes. 20th Century-Fox.

f \*LANDET OCH WOLKET (The Country and People)—An unusually beautiful and interesting travelogue. Scandinavian Talking Pictures.

fj MAN IN THE BARN, THE (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's Mysteries)—Was John Wilkes Booth killed in that Virginia barn after shooting Lincoln? Vivid and interesting presentation of another conflict between history and legend. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

*(Continued on next page)*

- f \*MARCH OF TIME NO. 5 (4th Series)—Covering Finland's 20th anniversary as an independent country, how radio comedians get their jokes, and the highspots of Joseph P. Kennedy's Maritime Commission report on Ships, Strikes and Seamen. RKO-Radio.
- fj NOT SO DUMB—Interesting examples of unusual friendships between animals. Educational.
- f PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 5—Dolls that are different, Ebbitide, technicolor, skiis and shadows. Paramount.
- f SILVER THREADS (Strange As It Seems Series)—Showing the tragedy of the author of "Silver Threads Among the Gold" and his wife. Columbia.
- f STRANGER THAN FICTION NO. 45—Unbreakable glass used for lenses, plucking Ostrich feathers, two girl butchers who help their father in his butcher shop, a tame duck that goes everywhere with his small owner, fabric making, a small child trains her pony, Pelican Island where the pelicans come to lay and hatch their eggs. Universal.
- f VITAPHONE PICTORIAL REVIEW NO. 4—Interesting things—Armless woman draws pictures using her mouth to hold the brush, how prize fighters are trained, showing how rubber dolls are made. Vitaphone.
- fj WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE (Grantland Rice Spotlight)—Ted Husing tells of water sports and frolics. Paramount.

#### CARTOONS AND COMEDIES

- f ALI BABA'S 40 THIEVES (Popeye Cartoon)—Popeye encounters Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves and conquers them. One of the best in the Popeye series. Paramount.
- f BARNYARD BOSS (Terrytoon Cartoon)—The ladies of the barnyard neglect their egg-laying for Bingo till the boss discovers how to combine sport with duty. Educational.
- f DIME A DANCE—Imogene Coca's style of comedy is funny and makes a lot of laughs in this little farce. Educational.
- f EDGAR AND GOLIATH—Edgar Kennedy. A pretty funny farce about Edgar and a tractor. RKO-Radio.
- f KOO KOO KORRESPONDENCE SKOOL—Jefferson Machamer. Machamer's original combination of farce and cartooning makes an amusing sketch. Educational.
- j LITTLE LAMBY (Cartoon in Color)—How a poor little lamb is caught by a wolf but is rescued before she is eaten. Paramount.
- j LITTLE MATCH GIRL, THE (Cartoon) Color Rhapsody. The story of the little match girl who uses her last matches to warm herself, and dies and goes to heaven. Columbia.
- f LITTLE RED WALKING HOOD (Cartoon)—An amusing cartoon, the old nursery tale elaborated with touches of sophisticated burlesque. Vitaphone.
- j SCRAPPY'S NEWS FLASHES (Scrappy Cartoon)—Scrappy broadcasts the latest news. Columbia.
- fj SEPTEMBER IN THE RAIN—Cartoon. Vitaphone.

#### MUSICALS, NOVELTIES AND SERIALS

- f ALIBI MARK—Floyd Gibbons true adventure series. Vitaphone.
- f COMMUNITY SING NO. 2—Singing some of the good old Irish tunes. Columbia.
- f DANGER, HIGH VOLTAGE—Floyd Gibbons true adventure series. Vitaphone.
- f HENRY KING AND HIS ORCHESTRA—Musical number. Vitaphone.
- f HOW TO DANCE THE SHAG—Arthur Murray teaches a group of boys and girls the new dance craze. Amusing and entertaining. Educational.
- fj JUNGLE MENACE (Serial) NO. 15. The end of a serial laid in Bengal. Columbia.
- f LAUGHING AT FATE—Thrilling daredevil stunts collected from the news-reel cameraman's adventures. 20th Century-Fox.
- f \*NIGHT AT THE MOVIES, A—Robert Benchley. Mr. Man and his wife go to the movies—a fine example of Benchley humor. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f OK KAY RHYTHM—Harbie Kay and his orchestra. Paramount.
- f SCREEN SNAPSHOTS NO. 3—Seeing the Hollywood stars at work and play with Harriett Parsons. Columbia.
- j TIM TYLER'S LUCK (Serial) NOS. 6-9. Further adventures of Tim Tyler who is looking for his lost father in the African jungle. Universal.
- j ZORRO RIDES AGAIN (Serial) NOS. 6-11. Zorro, the Mystery Man, continues his adventures in saving a railroad for its owners. Republic.

## NATIONAL MOTION PICTURE COUNCIL

The community or field work of the National Board of Review is conducted under its National Motion Picture Council, through affiliated membership groups, service contact groups and correspondents throughout the country. The National Council assists in the organization and program of work of local groups which are usually called Councils.

These Councils follow a plan initiated by the National Board in 1916 of having a membership composed of representatives from many organizations, cultural, educational, recreational, religious, and civic, so that they typify the original movement for community participation in the development and best use of the motion picture as recreation and education.

The objectives of such organizations are as follows:

To demonstrate through the education of public opinion, the effectiveness of selection and classification, instead of censorship, as a means of forwarding the development of the motion picture and its best uses.

To encourage through open meetings, forums, classes and other means, the study of the motion picture as a medium of entertainment, education and artistic expression.

To concentrate the attention of the public on specific worthwhile films through the publication of a Photo-play Guide to the selected pictures being currently shown at local theatres.

To arrange family Friday night or week-end programs of selected films, and junior matinees of pictures particularly suited to the tastes of children, through co-operation with local exhibitors.

To endorse and further the use of visual education through motion pictures in the schools.

To arrange and promote occasional exhibitions of exceptional and cultural films that would not normally be shown in the commercial theatres.

#### PUBLICATIONS

The National Board of Review and its Council as an aid to the groups carrying out these objectives furnishes an informational service through its publications.

National Board of Review Magazine (monthly)

\$2.00 a year for individual subscriptions

\$1.00 a year to Council or club groups

Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures

\$2.50 a year when taken alone, available at a special rate of \$1.00 in conjunction with the Magazine.

Selected Pictures Catalog (annual) \_\_\_\_\_ 25c

Special Film Lists \_\_\_\_\_ 10c ea.

Such as Selected Films for Children's Showings, Selected Book-Films, Educational Films, etc.

National Board of Review—Its Background, Growth and Present Status \_\_\_\_\_ free

National Board of Review—How It Works \_\_\_\_\_ free

A Plan and a Program for Community Motion Picture Councils \_\_\_\_\_ 10c



# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

Vol. XIII, No. 2



February, 1938



*The Great Fire of "In Old Chicago" (see page 15)*

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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

m ACTION FOR SLANDER—Clive Brook, Ann Todd. Novel by Mary Borden. Directed by Tom Whelan. Out of such a trivial matter as an accusation of cheating at cards evolves a drama that culminates in a tense, interesting courtroom scene. Human and engrossing all the way through. United Artists.

fj CASSIDY OF BAR 20—William Boyd. Story by A. Mulford "Me an' Shorty." Directed by Leslie Selander. Hop-a-long-Cassidy and his friends go to the aid of some friends who are having their cattle rustled. Compared with other Westerns it is above the average. Paramount.

f CHANGE OF HEART—Gloria Stuart, Michael Whalen. Screen story by Frances Hyland and Albert Ray. Directed by James Tinling. A sentimental comedy of a quarreling young husband and wife reunited by an orphan boy. Lots of amusing business keeps the rather slight plot moving along briskly. 20th Century Fox.

fj CHECKERS—Jane Withers, Una Merkle, Stuart Erwin. Screen story by Lynn Root and Frank Fenton. Directed by H. Bruce Humberstone. Young Miss Withers fixes up things for people in her usual style and with her usual assurance, this time converting a sedate lady to gambling on horse races. Sure fire for Withers fans. 20th Century-Fox.

f EVERYBODY SING—Judy Garland, Allan Jones, Fanny Brice. Screen story by Florence Ryerson and Edgar Allan Wolff. Directed by Edwin L. Marin. The young daughter of an actress and a playwright goes on the stage to save her family from

bankruptcy—humorous with a lot of singing interludes. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f HOLLYWOOD HOTEL—Dick Powell, Lola Lane. Screen story by Jerry Wald and Maurice Leo. Directed by Busby Berkeley. An entertaining musical picture though a little too long. The adventures of a small town boy who makes good in the movies. Hugh Herbert supplies most of the comedy and Benny Goodman most of the music. First National.

f \*IN OLD CHICAGO—See Exceptional Photoplays Department, page 15.

m INTERMEZZO—Gosta Ekman, Ingrid Bergman. Screen story by Gosta Stevens. Directed by Gustaf Molander. An interval in the life of a famous violinist in which he thought he loved a beautiful young pianist better than his wife and children. Beautifully produced, with power and tenderness in the acting. In Swedish with English captions. Scandinavian Talking Picture.

m LOOK OUT FOR LOVE—Anna Neagle, T. Carminati. Screen story by Ray Lewis. Directed by Herbert Wilcox. A story of two men who love the same girl. The girl, brought up among thieves, rises to fame and fortune through the generosity of one of the men. The acting is excellent and the production entertaining. Gaumont British.

f LOVE IS A HEADACHE—Gladys George, Franchot Tone, Mickey Rooney, Ted Healy. Screen story by Lou Heifetz and Herbert Klein. Directed by Richard Thorpe. An amusing comedy about a stage star out for publicity, a columnist out for de-bunking and a couple of orphans who brought a delayed love-affair to a head. Smartly written and directed. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

m MANNEQUIN — Joan Crawford, Spencer Tracy, Alan Curtis. Story "Marry for Money" by Katherine Brush. Directed by Frank Borzage. A girl from the tenements who marries to get away from them, and the entanglements that came from a worthless though attractive husband and a fine up-from-the-bottom rich man who fell in love with her. One of the best of Joan Crawford pictures for her admirers. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

fj OLD BARN DANCE, THE — Gene Autry, Helen Valkis, Smiley Burnette. Screen story by Bernard McConville and Charles F. Royal. Directed by Joseph Kane. A singing cowboy picture, which departs entertainingly from the usual formula for such films, and is not only interesting but very likeable. Republic.

f OUTLAWS OF THE PRAIRIE—Charles Starrett. Screen story by Harry F. Orlin.

(Continued on page 19)



# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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## The Future of Color in the Movies

By ROBERT EDMOND JONES

*Mr. Jones is one of the most distinguished of America's scenic artists, whose work has had great importance in the advancement of theatrical production. He was the first to bring a creative artist's genius to the use of color on the motion picture screen. This address was given at the Board's Annual Conference Luncheon.*

ABOUT a hundred years ago a Scotchman named David Octavius Hill invented a machine he called a camera and made with it likenesses of people that he called photographs. Everyone in the world was tremendously interested in these mechanical likenesses. The camera was gradually developed and photographs became more and more lifelike year by year. Presently they became so lifelike that they began to move. Then they began to talk. Then they began to sing. Now they are taking on all the colors of Nature. Soon they are going to be in the round—what the producers call "three-dimensional." Presently they are going to step off the screen and come into your own homes on the television screen. After that, not so long perhaps from now, they will step off that screen and appear in your homes in the round, all but alive. And if we are to take seriously the extremely interesting ideas of Mr. Priestly as expressed in his play *Time and the Conways*, it may be that presently we shall be able to see the stars of day-after-tomorrow not only in their present, but in their past and in their future lives, all in one blinding flash.

I have often wondered why all this should happen. Certainly nobody asked the photo-

graphs to develop in this way, but that is what they are doing. And I suppose the result will be that presently (again, perhaps in the nearer, rather than the more remote future) everybody in the world will be immediately present to every other person in the world and privacy will be completely abolished. Quite seriously I think that that is the goal (if you call it a goal!) toward which we are moving. It is a horrible thought to me, but I think that that fantastic idea may be a reality of tomorrow.

In any case, we are now in the color stage of this development. We all like color, I think, for two very simple reasons:

The first is, that when we see color on the screen it appeals to what I call our sense of recognition. We like to see the colors of trees and flowers and lips and eyes and hair, and we like to see a beautiful sunset and we like to know what color Marion Davies is, for example. And we say, "Why yes, I knew that Freddie March's hair would be like that. And of course Shirley Temple's is that color. Didn't I tell you?" The extraordinary thing about this color camera is that it can reproduce all the tones of Nature. It can give you what Homer calls the "rosy-fingered dawn," and it can also give you your Aunt Minnie, just exactly as she looks in life.

What is happening through this sense of recognition is that the entire world is being today made color-conscious. This is a trite kind of slogan, I am afraid. The world is being made conscious of very many things

through advertisements. (I even read the other day that there was a strong movement on foot to make America "canary-conscious!") But, as a matter of fact, what could be more worth while than to make the entire world conscious of color? It is as wonderful as if the world were deaf and suddenly its ears were opened and it heard Toscanini for the first time.

The second reason we like color is because color *means* something to us. We "see red", as we say, when we are angry. We "feel blue." We get in "a brown study." We speak of So-and-so being "green with envy." I am in "a black mood." He is "yellow." I am "purple with rage." I am "all in a pink cloud." I see everything "through rose-colored glasses." And so on. This association of color and mood is, I am convinced, the way in which color on the screen is going to develop. There are, I think, the beginnings of a very interesting use of that in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and it will be interesting for you to watch picture after picture and see how the emotional association of color develops.

The present situation with regard to color is this: Let me make a few simple comparisons. One may illustrate things that would take a very long time to explain.

If we may say that black and white pictures are like speaking—I don't mean public speaking; I mean speaking—if black-and-white pictures are like speech, then color pictures are like singing. If black-and-white pictures are like drawing, then color pictures are like painting. If black-and-white pictures may be compared to a solo, then color pictures may be compared to a symphony. If black-and-white pictures are like playing the piano, then color pictures are like conducting an orchestra.

What I mean by these comparisons is that color is not only more complicated and more elaborate than black-and-white, but that it is something quite different in kind. It has new laws, new conventions, quite different from black-and-white laws and conventions, and it needs an entirely new type of thinking. A good speaker, a man who has good diction, shall we say, is not necessarily a good singer. A good draftsman is not necessarily a good painter. A good pianist is not

## Monthly Group Discussion

BY way of obtaining a cross-section of popular opinion regarding the many interesting factors in the field of motion pictures, the National Board of Review Magazine has decided to ask its affiliate groups to cooperate in supplying material. It is suggested that each group, at its monthly meeting, discuss a subject which shall be chosen every month by the Editor. The findings of each group-discussion should be described (fully, but not wordily!) and sent to the Editor, who will incorporate them into a general article on the chosen subject in a subsequent issue of the magazine. In this way a double objective will be reached: the National Board will have first-hand intimation of the views and aims of its affiliates, while the latter will have an opportunity to make public representation of their opinions.

The Editor's choice of subject for this month is:

"WOULD YOU LIKE ALL YOUR PICTURES TO BE IN COLOR?"

It is requested that the President of each group partaking in this discussion send in the report of the group's conclusions as early as possible.

The Editor will welcome any suggestions as to interesting subjects for future monthly discussions. It is also hoped occasionally to print selected reports from the groups in full in the magazine.

The Editor will be grateful for the widest possible cooperation on the part of all groups throughout the country.

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necessarily a good conductor. And a good song-writer is not necessarily a good composer. These things are quite different in kind. And insofar as the present makers of motion pictures see this difference, see the challenge of new medium and meet it, insofar they will progress.

It will be exciting for us all to watch that progress.



# Importance of the Motion Picture as World Communication

By WILLIAM P. MONTAGUE, JR.

*An address given at the National Board's Fourteenth Annual Conference. Mr. Montague is News Editor of Paramount News.*

A few years ago the newsreels were used as a chaser, that is, they were considered so bad they were put on the screen to clear the house after a feature picture.

They have come a long way from those early days and they have now reached the point where seeing on the screen is practically believing the screen. Most of the groundwork for the growth of the newsreels was worked out twenty-five years ago by Albert Richard, first of Pathé, then of Paramount News, and known as the dean of the newsreel editors.

It was this man who first built up their theatrical value to the present point where, for instance, the National Board of Review now considers them worthy of study. In the next place he helped develop them into a vital force in world communication, a ten million dollar a year agency for the coverage and distribution of international news. And finally, Richard was the man who first gave the newsreels a social consciousness that has, in the end, made them an accepted world-wide system for the exchange of ideas.

My job with Paramount News is that of News Editor. I sit at a great map of the world and move little pins around. However, there are hundreds of little pins in that map. Each pin represents a news cameraman, and each move means an expenditure of several hundred dollars.

Let us say a flash comes in, over our Associated Press printer, of an earthquake in India. A thousand dead. I send a cable, move a pin on the map a few inches, and half way around the world a cameraman in Egypt, perhaps, climbs out of bed and rushes off a thousand miles by plane to reach the scene of the disaster.

This work goes on twenty-four hours a day, every day in the year. By cable, by telephone, and with our New York staff men, we are constantly chasing the news. And

this chase applies to all five newsreels, as we all fight it out on much the same grounds.

Once the pictures are made, the race is on to New York, the headquarters of all the newsreels, to catch the makeup deadlines each Monday and Wednesday night. The newsreel reaching New York first with its pictures releases them. The others do not. They cannot afford to admit they were beaten. They just pretend they never heard of the story, scrap the film and take the loss. The winner takes all.

Once the negative is edited, it is given to the laboratory for printing. A newsreel makes from three to five hundred prints of each edition or around a thousand prints a week. This compares with a hundred prints made of a feature picture. As each newsreel print is a thousand feet long, it is easy to see that each newsreel company is turning out about fifty million feet of film a year. That is a lot of footage. The five newsreels reach about 16,000 theatres every week. They are seen by approximately eighty million people weekly, in this country alone.

Most of the American newsreels own, or are associated with, newsreels in Europe, South America, Africa, Australia, and Japan. Our material is shipped from this country on every boat leaving America. In Europe the offstage voice is added, in the language of the country in which it is to be distributed. Perhaps 28 or 30 different editions are made for as many countries.

These foreign newsreels, in turn, are constantly sending the films made abroad to this country. It is a tremendous world-wide system of news coverage and distribution, chiefly controlled by the American reels. An American-made newsreel picture may have a world-wide distribution doubling its American audience, and will probably outrun the distribution of the average feature picture. I remember four years after we had stopped making silent newsreels the old silent reel still brought in book returns, from four year old silent newsreel prints that continued to circulate through the South Sea Islands.

Pathé Brothers started the first regular newsreel in this country in 1910, and at first had pretty hard going. The early newsreels went in for any pictures that could be grabbed on the run—such as the obvious pictorial shots of bathing beauties, cornerstone layings, and marching troops. The early producers discovered, however, that it was possible to create pictorial news when there wasn't any. Pathé, on its second issue, was approached by a man who wanted to jump off a roof in a parachute. And while the jump was unsuccessful, the picture was still exciting and it looked like news. That inaugurated the stunt period era.

In the old days, we used to make one or two stunt pictures a week. You probably remember them. Why we didn't liquidate the entire breed of stunt men, and get sued out of business by a suffering world, I don't know. In those days we used to roller skate along building ledges, slide across Broadway on tight ropes, ride over cliffs on motorcycles, crash planes, land blimps on roofs, lay smoke screens around anything and everything, and go to any extreme so long as it was exciting.

Wars were also exciting events and we pursued them in every quarter of the world. One enterprising Chicago firm is supposed to have paid Pancho Villa thirty thousand dollars for the exclusive picture rights of his revolution. This firm is said to have insisted that his battles be fought to suit the photographic light and camera locations. Since then we have covered dozens of wars, the World War, Russian Revolution, Cuba, Ethiopia, Spain and now China. And it is *not* for reasons of military propaganda that we cover but because wars are *news*—World news—and it is our function to distribute news, whether we like the subjects or not.

During these experimental years, the tradition of tremendous rivalry between the newsreels was also built up. No amount of money was too great to spend in reaching Broadway first with practically any news picture. Planes—sometimes three or four—would be used when it would insure getting the pictures through. Special trains would be hired when the planes could not fly.

Do you remember back in '28 when the German plane Bremen came down on Greenly Island, off Labrador, after the first east

to west trans-Atlantic flight? The newsreels spent twenty thousand dollars for a few hours beat on Broadway. One enterprising cameraman bought over a thousand dollars worth of gasoline as he flew down the Canadian Coast, burning it as he purchased it so that his competitors could not get it to refuel their planes and follow him through to Greenly Island.

Those days were similar to the riotous early days of newspapers—before the telegraph—when Bennett ran his own pony express up from New Orleans, to bring twelve day old news of the Mexican war to the New York Herald. We still have to carry our newsreel pictures bodily, the days of telegraphing them, and the days of television are still far in the future.

However, just about President Roosevelt's first term, the newsreels discovered that while spending all this money was very exciting and lots of fun, the people in the theatres around the world were beginning to question the kind of pictures we were making, and why we were making such a hullabaloo about getting them to the theatres *first*.

And about that time, Albert Richard reasoned that since we had developed a worldwide system of film exchange, we had won the rights of a news agency. We could walk into a palace, or the White House, at any time and demand privileges. But he also decided that we had to go on and fulfill the obligations of any news agency that is to live. The newsreels had to develop a social viewpoint and try to supply the really basic news of mankind. As a result, we all started a period of experimentation, and I might add we are still experimenting, still trying to discover exactly what type of news people want to see in a theatre.

Probably as a result of the depression, the newsreels discovered, among other factors, that the people of this country were suddenly poor and wanted dollar and cents news. We tried everything—learned studies by college professors who explained, with animated diagrams, why stocks went down and food prices up. We got long-winded comments from the man in the street who was not an authority at all, but who had a certain human value.

We studied the newspapers and picked up



some of their crusades, going after subjects such as the Ku Klux Klan, patent medicine manufacturers, child labor—anything that had human social news. We experimented with exposés, and burned our fingers because of the obvious fact, that a newsreel, cannot stand up on its hind legs and take an editorial stand. Instead, it is forced to take a lot of unanswered abuse and a libel suit or two.

There are few types of stories we did not tackle. We have tried better housing campaigns, the Scottsboro Case, child labor, Social Security, and we have even made stunt pictures around the hazards the S. P. C. A. agents go through in rescuing animals up trees or down chimneys.

We are still experimenting on this question of what is news for the newsreel screen. We have a world-wide picture network—how can we best use it to suit the needs of millions of people in dozens of countries.

I believe your program for tomorrow night includes a highlight review of the outstanding newsreel pictures of the last five years. In looking over the stories, I am struck by the number of good stories produced, particularly during the last year. Of course, it may have simply been a big news year. But I also think that securing some of these pictures that we did last year indicated certain significant trends in the newsreel business.

The explosion of the Zeppelin Hindenburg is without doubt the outstanding newsreel picture ever made. You have all probably seen it. But that picture is significant of the thorough, twenty-four hour a day, coverage given every possible news lead by all the newsreels.

The Hindenburg at the time of the ill-fated voyage had made 21 trips across the ocean. There was no more reason for an accident happening on her arrival here than there had been on her departure and arrival on any of the other twenty round trips. Yet each of the five newsreels had pictures of the disaster.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent each year by the newsreels trying to anticipate news events in every country. That is how the great pictures are secured. That is why cameramen were present when King Alexander of Yugoslavia was assassi-

nated. Naturally, we will cover a King entering a foreign country and with two or three cameramen. That is how we get those hurricane pictures from the South. Word is radioed that a hurricane is coming North across the Carribean Sea. We chart its likely course and where it is likely to strike the coast. We then fly a cameraman South to meet it. He lands—ties himself and his camera to a steel post—and when the hurricane strikes he gets the pictures.

Another rather famous picture you will see is the Chicago steel riots. I think those pictures are significant, not so much as world news coverage, but as part of the attention the newsreels are now giving to social news. The newsreels are out after news of events and situations that affect the daily lives of people, economic news, scientific news, how people can raise their standard of living, and how they can enjoy their lives more fully.

One day early last Summer I received a telephone call from our cameraman in Chicago. He was just about to leave with the other cameramen for the Indianapolis Auto Races. They have been practically sure fire routing as you know, for a dozen years, for every newsreel, and besides the boys always have a big party down there. The cameraman did mention, however, rather reluctantly, that he had been out at South Chicago that day on the steel strikes and things looked rather bad.

I fussed around and finally took a gamble and pulled him off the auto races and told him to stick on the steel strike, as having the possibility of more basic news. As you know, the next day ten people were killed and we secured a rather famous riot picture.

Senator LaFollette was holding a Senate investigation in Washington at that time and he asked for the picture to use as evidence. As soon as they had been put into the Senate records they were sent around the world for release. Some theatres showed them, some did not. Many towns barred them under their police or censorship powers. That is something we have no control over.

You will see an entirely different type of picture in the coronation of King George of England. This picture really represents a milestone in newsreel history, not in news coverage, but in the recognition of the newsreels as a legitimate powerful news agency

by a highly conservative institution, the British Crown.

There have been other coronations since the invention of the movie camera, but all the newsreel pictures ever shot of them have been limited to the processions through the streets. After all, the coronation ceremonies symbolize a great Empire's almost sacred respect to its form of government.

However, since the previous coronation the newsreels have grown up and have at last been recognized even by British royalty as a legitimate and necessary news medium. A precedent was established and newsreel cameramen were permitted inside Westminster Abbey.

The five newsreels used about a hundred and fifty cameramen to film every angle of the coronation. Special lenses were designed for special shots and some cameras shot color film. Moving picture sound equipment and lights were located in the Abbey itself in special camera boxes hung on the walls and columns and then hidden from view. I might add that the first print pulled of the ceremonies was rushed to Buckingham Palace for a request showing to the British King and Queen themselves.

One other story you will see that I would like to mention is the pictures made in Nanking during the present Chinese war. These were pictures made by one man—not a hundred and fifty cameramen with special lenses, special credentials and special lighting—but one man working alone. I think those Nanking pictures are significant when it comes to the question of the cameramen who make pictures around the world.

We sent a cameraman, Arthur Menken, a young Harvard society boy, into Nanking before the Japanese attacked the city, instructing him to dig in and get the pictures of a great, modern city in the 20th Century being captured by an alien army. Assignments like this are not new to Menken. Last year he was wounded while covering the Spanish War. The year before that he worked on the Italian conquest of Abyssinia.

Well, Menken got into Nanking. The Japanese advanced and once they really started to attack that city all the other newsreel men received orders to leave aboard the gunboat Panay. Only Arthur Menken remained. His assignment was to get the

pictures of the sack of a city even at the very grave risk of his life.

Of course, you know the irony of the story. The newsreel cameramen who left on the Panay got one of the really great newsreel pictures of all times, the Panay Incident. Menken, who remained to the bitter end, got nothing except a few days in a Japanese prison. But he did carry out orders, he stuck to his story and not a man on our staff blames him for the luck of our business.

And incidentally, it is these cameramen in a hundred cities around the world who have built the newsreels into a world-wide system of news communication. It is these men—guided by Richard and the other old-time editors in the field—who are picturing the kind of news the world wants to see, that have won the newsreels a place as a powerful news agency. And all of these men, I am sure, are proud that the National Board of Review, representing the constructive students of the Motion Picture Industry, is giving some of its time to the study of the work of the newsreel cameramen in the field of factual screen news.

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## A Series of Legal Films

A new use of the motion picture in education comes with the announcement by the Film Foundation of America of *Law Film Classics*, sponsored by a group of interested Harvard Law School Alumni. This is a series of instructive talking picture lectures dedicated to the progress of legal education. The film lectures are of significance in preserving the living personalities of those who have made great contributions in the field of law. The lectures are available to Bar Associations, law conventions and conferences, law schools and other legal groups. Prints have been made on both 35 mm. size, suitable for theatre and large convention showings, and on 16 mm. for showings in smaller rooms. Information on subjects and bookings can be secured by addressing: Film Foundation of America, Inc., First National Bank Building, Boston, Mass.



# Majority and Minority Audiences

By GILBERT SELDES

*From an address given at the Fourteenth Annual Conference of the National Board of Review. Mr. Seldes is the author of "The Seven Lively Arts," "An Hour with the Movies and the Talkies," "The Movies Come from America," and "Your Money and Your Life."*

I am talking about "Majority and Minority Audiences". I might as well say I do not think minority audiences have any rights at all. That is roughly the statement. There are a few reservations which I may have time to make, but if I had the choice between the majority demands and minority demands, I would ultimately have to give everything to the majority.

The pure mechanics of the motion picture, I think, make this inevitable. I do not think you can ever honestly make moving pictures for private showings; obscenities, yes, but not a really great moving picture. It cannot be made to be shown to one or two people, or one or two small groups. You probably remember King Ludwig—the Second, I think—of Bavaria, who used to have an entire performance of an opera produced when he was all alone in the audience. Well, you also remember, if you do know he did that, that he was mad, and that business of seeing a thing by himself was part of his madness. An opera, I think, can be produced and should be, for a very limited number of people. In that limited number you exclude me.

As to moving pictures, I think somehow it would seem to me wrong to think of a moving picture which did not basically want to communicate what it had to say to the greatest possible number.

About the minority tastes and majority tastes, I think it would be a great blessing if we really got some data, a few facts on what really is liked by people in the movies, and I think the facts are necessary because we have a great tendency to confuse their taste in the movies with their taste in the great arts, the major arts, painting or sculpture, fiction and serious music.

All of those arts, all of the arts, in fact, which we know, up to quite recent years were not addressed to the majority of people. I am not a Marxian, and yet I think we are

entitled to a little bit of economic determinism there. Most of the arts were produced under certain conditions in which a small number of people were the only ones to whom the work of art was addressed. They were produced at a court. They were produced under the aegis of a patron, a rich man who said, "Here, take this money and produce for me by tomorrow night an operetta which we will have in my salon," or "Make me a piece of sculpture." The one patron of the arts that stood against that small group thing was, of course, the Church in the Middle Ages.

All of those arts have, therefore, an essentially aristocratic background, and I want to give you an example of that which I think entertained me more than any other, because it did not affect me. It was in the past. I was in Sweden a few years ago and went out to see the theatre at Drottningholm, which had been built, I think, 125 years ago. It was about the shape of this group of chairs, a long narrow affair, and right about out here in front, there were two enormous thrones, chairs, with very high backs, for the King and Queen to sit in. They effectively barred the view of the stage for at least half the audience behind them.

That was not all. The King of Sweden at that period suffered from a defect which really was an advantage: he did not feel the cold. Because the King could not feel the cold, no heating arrangements, whatever, were in this theatre. In the dead of winter these unfortunate actors who were always playing Jupiter and Juno in gauze, would have to wear furs and flannels underneath the gauze, and everybody else in the audience froze.

You get the counterpart of it if you take the trouble to go across the street, more or less, to the Metropolitan Opera House. You will find the Metropolitan was built under good aristocratic architectural principles, that only the very rich are entitled to see and hear perfectly, and the moderately rich are entitled to see and hear a little bit. In the Opera House in Paris there are several boxes in which you cannot see anything at

all. That seems perfectly reasonable. You are only paying enough to hear and not to see.

The first great democratization, so to speak, of the house in which you saw entertainment came when the big movie houses were built. Except for the very off-center seats, which are only filled in great crowded successes, you can see very well from 98 per cent of the seats, and I think that is an indication to you that in a sense the picture has to be seen by a great number of people. And our problem is how to make sure that this great number can see good pictures, far more than how we, a small minority, can see the kind of pictures we like.

My first point is, there is this aristocratic background of all the other arts, and some time in the last 150 years the artists, themselves, developed that to a very peculiar and unfortunate degree when they said, "We, the artists, are infinitely superior to all other people. We are the seers, the prophets, the priests. We can lead the people, we understand the soul of the people. We are, therefore, far too good for the people. Only a small number of people can really understand the subtleties, the delicacies of our thoughts and feelings."

How they made that peculiar combination of believing they could lead the people and yet the people could not understand them, I do not know. It is one of the freaks of the romantic mind, but that they did, and they began to drift away from the old purpose of writing, composing, painting and sculpting, which was to communicate something to somebody, until you get, in our own time, the general idea that the less you communicate to fewer people, the more certain you are to be a very great artist indeed. The shape of that you may find in certain passages of Mr. Joyce's works, and more often in the works of critics who admire these things than in the pretention of the artists themselves.

In those circumstances, I do not think it is odd that, say, your average man cannot make a reasonable judgment between Leonardo on one side and Landseer on the other, or Norman Douglas and Ethel M. Dell. After all, Norman Douglas deliberately wrote for about ten thousand people. He wrote an exquisite book called "South Wind", yes, but

he did not direct it to five million or ten million people. Therefore, if five or ten million people do not read the Douglas work, I do not see how you can blame them. I even doubt very much whether the great number of people have determined that Homer and Plato were the great writers. Up to 150 years ago, only a very few people could read at all, and I think the judgment we have, with which I do not quarrel, that Homer and Plato were great writers, comes, after all, from a small number of people.

We cannot ask the great majority to give us good judgments on works which are not directed to them. In the moving picture you have the first, I think, great art which can be shown to every single human being simultaneously. Give them enough theatres and prints, and you can show the same movie to everybody in the world at the same time. I do not think you can get away from it. The producers feel that in the back of their minds. I think every producer wants the total potential audience. He hates the idea of anybody seeing a picture he has not made. He wants everybody to see the picture he has just launched, and basically, I think, he is right.

When you give people something which you want them definitely to understand, when you prepare a work of art for them which you have done in the movies, their judgment is, I think, right about 50 per cent of the time. Incidentally, that is a very high batting average.

My own little list of ten is the list of those pictures which have had the highest box office receipts of all time. That is taken from the Motion Picture Daily, probably—*The Birth of a Nation*, *Big Parade*, *Cavalcade*, *Broadway Melody*, and *The Covered Wagon*, five of those ten; also *The Singing Fool*, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, the *Jazz Singer*, *Ben Hur*, and *Sunny Side Up*. A slight difference in my tone in reading the two groups of five indicates that the first five are definitely among the best pictures made. Certainly, each one in its time was the best made up to that time, whereas the other five I do not think are so interesting or important, and I note in the last five you have at least two which were the great Al Jolson talking pictures, and they swept to their enormous gross because they



were a great novelty as the first singing and talking pictures.

However, the public, you see, made no mistake about such things as *The Birth of a Nation*, *Covered Wagon*, *Big Parade*, etc.

The public certainly made no mistake about the pre-eminence of Chaplin as opposed to any other comedian. Chaplin's pictures rank about eleventh, thirteenth, fifteenth, at highest grosses ever taken in and those are his big seven-reel features. His small one-reel pictures went on being shown throughout year after year and probably rolled up the greatest gross of any single feature in the world. The public did not make any mistake. At one time or another there might have been a flash in which somebody else was considered the most popular comedian, but give the public its twenty years and they were certainly right about Mr. Chaplin's position.

On the other hand, I am not saying hundreds of second-rate pictures have not made money, but the second-rate in almost all the arts is extremely popular. There are only a minute number of pictures to which, I think, the critics have definitely accorded applause, only a very small number, which completely failed. *Caligari*, in this country, was a great failure and critics were extremely dumb about it. I say that quite freely, because I was one of the dumbest of all critics on the subject of *Caligari*, because we could have made it liked, and went out of our way to make it disliked.

*The Informer* was a modified failure in this country, in spite of everything the critics could do. *The Plough and the Stars*, which followed, was a greater failure. The critics, I think, realized it was a little bit more than entertainment, definitely. It had become a work of art in a serious way, and therefore, was not strictly a good picture. I maintain the pets of the esthetes have usually been pretty unsatisfactory pictures. In the last few months, I think your averages hold up pretty well. The best serious picture is *The Life of Emile Zola*, definitely a successful picture.

One of the most successful of all current pictures, one which, if you have not seen it, I thoroughly recommend to you, is a little trifle called *Nothing Sacred*. It is one of the most beautifully made pictures I have

ever seen. I have sometimes thought, in the last month or so, that technically it is the best made picture I have ever seen. I am not sure. I want to go back and observe again. The pleasure of watching an absolutely perfectly coordinated piece of work on the screen you get from seeing that, and, incidentally, it is a howling comedy. I recommend to you the picture that will open in a few weeks, called *The River*. There the majority and minority may come to blows. *The River* I admire intensely, a documentary picture. We are wandering a little off the field. Documentary is not the kind of thing which is always directed to the majority audience. It ought to be liked by everybody. I shall be extremely sorry if it fails of at least moderate success.

As for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, there may be a good esthetic taste against it, but there is no division between the popular majority and minority taste in that respect.

That brings me to this—if the minority really wants better pictures, it ought to give up the hope of having pictures made especially for itself. Financially that is impossible, and philosophically or socially I do not think it is desirable. Also, I wish that the little traces of artiness that do creep into Hollywood would be expunged in some way, certain types of whimsicality in dialogue and certain types of strain in directing. I recall what was done to Louise Rainer in something about the candlesticks. It was perfectly appalling the way in which they tried to make her be, I can only say, artistic all the time. They just moulded and modeled her face. She was totally without expression. She is an actress who has some capacity. They were killing her for the sake of art, because she had done a serious picture before, *The Good Earth*.

We want to raise the level of moving picture production, do we say? The only reason I want the level of moving picture production to rise is that I go a great deal to the movies, and I dislike seeing movies which really are too vulgar and insulting to the minute intelligence which I bring to bear on them in the evenings after my work. I feel that I am entitled to see a good moving picture when I go to see the movies. If the level rises in Hollywood, I will just see

more pictures I like. That is my interest. I am not hoping to raise the level in order to do good to the country at all. The country had better look out for itself and not depend on me to do it much good. I know neither I, put in the position of God in Hollywood, nor the people now in that position in Hollywood, can produce nothing but masterpieces, but what we really would like to see is that the second order picture should not be silly and tawdry and too sentimental for us to bear.

In a little book of mine, "The Movies Come From America," Mr. Charles Chaplin wrote an introduction. I want to quote a passage from it:

"Nevertheless, if the element of aesthetic criticism were considered in censoring a film, it might result in a more adequate method of judging what is morally fit for the public. For many films that now pass the censors, if judged by their aesthetic standards, would be banned in their entirety because of their lack of good taste, their false standards of life and their vulgar treatment."

You see, even Chaplin, who is not here, has agreed with all of us. You do not get away from the perfectly definite things in the movies any more than the multiplication table. The intellectual has so far attacked pictures because they have not pleased. The producer said, "We could not do that, because we would not make any money. The public will not support good films."

That is one of the howling lies the producers tell. The esthete, for instance, does not know good pictures are being made, and the producer still goes on believing that those pictures fail. The pictures that cost the most money bring in the red ink, and most of them are bad pictures. The good ones turn in a fairly reasonable amount of profit.

The esthete is snobbish, and the producer has not the time or intelligence or will to create first-rate films. Also there is this appalling thing—second rate films do make a lot of money, and why should a producer worry? If he can go away on a six months' holiday, if he can let his mind wander for two or three hours a day, he can make his money out of second-rate pictures. Who are the greatest enemies? Not the majority with their taste. The great enemies are the

intellectuals who have not found out how to spread good news about the pictures.

Now I have one last thing to say in regard to the majority and minority demand. At the present moment I think it is perhaps more desirable that a picture should be popular even than that it should be good.

I mean that I am opposed violently to any effort to make the pictures so artistic, so intelligent, in such good taste, that the public will fall away from them. I want to keep as large as possible an audience in the moving picture houses. Because I think that our movies are one of the few things we would fight for. I think you could go out and destroy half the liberties of the American people and they would not be aware they had lost them, but if you took away their movies, they would be aware and would fight.

Inasmuch as I do not care for what reason you attack a dictatorship, for what reason you object to tyranny, I want the movies to remain enormously popular so at least we will have that one thing, and also radio, perhaps, we are willing to fight for. If we can destroy an incipient dictator in order to protect even the movies we have now, I think we will have done a very good job.

CONFERENCE talks to be covered in future issues of this Magazine are "The Importance of the Motion Picture as a Scientific Interest," Sidney K. Wolf, President, Society of Motion Picture Engineers; "Promoting Motion Pictures," Leon J. Bamberger, Sales Promotion Manager, RKO Radio Pictures, Inc.; "The Importance of the Motion Picture as a Publication Interest," Maurice Kann, Editor-in-Chief, *Box Office*; "The Importance of the Motion Picture as an Educational Medium," Herbert S. Walsh, Technical Supervisor, Objective Teaching Materials and Techniques, sponsored by New York City Board of Education; "The Movies as Entertainment," Mark Van Doren, motion picture critic, *The Nation*, and Associate Professor of English, Columbia University; "The Movies, the People, and the Critics," Dr. Mortimer J. Adler, Associate Professor of the Philosophy of Law, University of Chicago, author of "Art and Prudence"; "Movies and Popular Criticism," Alistair Cooke, radio film critic; "A Mid-West Critic Looks at the Films," Ward Marsh, film critic, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*; "The Film as Document and News," Edgar Anstey, Director of Productions, March of Time, Ltd., London.

Other talks at the Conference Luncheon also to be reported later were by Mr. Paul Moss, Commissioner of Licenses of the City of New York; Mrs. Mary K. Simkhovitch, Director, Greenwich House, New York City; Paul Rotha, author of "Celluloid" and "The Documentary Film."



# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS

## DEPARTMENT

*This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of Exceptional and Honorable*

*Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.*

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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## Of Human Hearts

*Screen play by Bradford Foote from Honore Morrow's "Benefits Forgot", directed by Clarence Brown, photographed by Clyde Devinna, musical score by Herbert Stothart. Produced by John W. Considine, Jr. for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.*

### The Cast

Ethan Wilkins .....	Walter Houston
Mary Wilkins .....	Beulah Bondi
Jason Wilkins .....	James Stewart
Jason Wilkins (as a child) .....	Gene Reynolds
George Ames .....	Guy Kibbe
Dr. Charles Shingle .....	Charles Coburn
President Lincoln .....	John Carradine
Jim Meaker .....	Charles Grapewin
Quid .....	Gene Lockhart
Elder Massey .....	Clem Bevans
Chauncey Ames .....	Sterling Holloway
Chauncey Ames as a child .....	Charles Peck
Annie Hawks .....	Anne Rutherford
Annie Hawks (as a child) .....	Leatrice Joy Gilbert
Sister Clark .....	Leona Roberts
Dr. Lupus Crumm .....	Robert McWade
Captain Griggs .....	Minor Watson
Rufus Inchpin .....	Arthur Aylesworth

QUIETLY, almost slowly this picture unfolds a scroll of American life that is impressive, moving and beautiful. Its beauty is of the homely sort, like that of old faces in which life and character have brought outward an inner loveliness to replace surface prettiness, though putting it that way might give a false impression that the picture deals with age. On the contrary, it is about the youth of our country, and the heart of the story is in youth's struggle to grow and expand and find its place in the world of men. But being set in a time when life moved at a slower tempo, when so much of the way of looking at things was different from ours, it has an old-fashioned atmosphere, and one has to look not only beneath the old-style clothes but the old-style man-

ner of thinking and talking and acting to see—and it can be seen plainly—that the same kind of human beings, hot with unchanging human stubbornnesses and determinations and prides and loves and absorptions, lived then as now.

Its story begins with the arrival in a little Ohio village, a few years before the Civil War, of a new minister and his wife and small son. They come from an older, more urbane life farther East across the river, to a newer, cruder country, where people are just getting rooted and existence is hard and full of struggle. These people are too poor themselves to pay the minister with anything but food and goods and old clothing, and right away young Jason Wilkins, who hasn't learned his mother's patience or his father's devotion to duty, begins to rebel. He hates wearing other people's clothes, and he hates the poverty of a place that cannot afford a school, or things to read, and when the town doctor, who is a fine and wise and tolerant man gone to seed through drink, turns out to be the only person in the neighborhood who owns any books or magazines, he cannot see why it is wrong for him to associate with such a man. It is from this doctor that the boy gets his first impulse of definite ambition, to be a doctor himself.

From the boy's first beginnings to think for himself, on through the years, there is a perpetual conflict with his father, with the mother, understanding both, always trying to explain each to the other. The man and boy love each other, respect each other, but they do not—never can, quite—understand each other. Each is honest, each is stubbornly faithful to his own ideals, and the difference in age and temperament makes



*The Arrival of the New Minister's Family in "Of Human Hearts."*

their ideals clash, till at last the boy, grown to a young man, runs away to a medical school in Baltimore, convinced that his father, working so hard but growing older and poorer, is a failure, and determined that his own life shall be something better.

While he is away at school, Jason is summoned home to see his father die, and only then does he realize the nobility and usefulness of his father's life. But when he gets back to school he is all absorbed in his studies, and the outside work he has to do to pay for his education, and drops all his ties to his home and mother. He is a fine student, and an appointment as Army Surgeon when the Civil War breaks out gives him a chance to make a brilliant record. But he is brought to a realization of what success has done to him by a sudden summons to go to Washington and see President Lincoln.

Jason's mother has become convinced that her son, so long silent, has been killed in the war, and she has written to the President

to ask him to tell her where her boy was buried. It was one of those letters that Lincoln always paid attention to and did something about, and his talk with the boy was one of those instances of his human understanding and sympathy that opened people's eyes and changed their lives. It made Jason grow up—and remember.

How indicate how such a simple story becomes strong and absorbing and impelling? It builds, in its sure way of adding one little thing to another, until it covers a remarkable span of life, and not only the life of the people in the foreground but so much of others in the background that it all becomes representative of a whole section of the nation. The way the story is put together makes a solid foundation for its life-likeness, but the living quality of it owes a tremendous debt to the picture's director and its actors, and to a feeling it creates of having gone outside a movie studio into natural surroundings where real people live their lives.



Perhaps the backbone of the picture is the way the character of Jason is carried from boyhood to manhood by the extraordinary fact that Gene Reynolds, as a boy, might, when grown up, actually be James Stewart. Such a happy bit of casting has rarely been seen—in looks, manner, everything that counts, there is nothing but years to make a difference between the two. Filling out the picture is a whole roster of fine characterizations, saving situations that could have easily been sentimental and mawkish, keeping the sentiment sound and genuine. Walter Huston and Beulah Bondi each perform a sort of miracle—he in making a fine spirit shine through a harsh and stubborn exterior, she in making a sweet and subservient old-fashioned mother not soft and saccharine but rich in beauty and strength of character. Charles Coburn makes a hearty figure of the inebriate doctor (why did he

ever reform?) and Guy Kibbe one of the most hateful skinflints outside of villaindom. The old codgers who sit around the cracker barrel in the village store, and the aged, deathless elder of the church, belong in Americana's gallery. There is an eyelashed damsel who is pretty movieish, but she does not count for much: Jason's bit of romance is not of the tempestuous, overshadowing kind.

John Carradine's President Lincoln gives the picture one of its tensest and most moving moments. It is remarkable re-creation of a person and a personality.

The title of the picture was the result of a prize contest, and rarely have such contests resulted so happily. *Of Human Hearts* really fits, for it sums up the whole appeal of a film that belongs in that ideal list of films that should be "permanently available." *Rated Exceptional* J.S.H.

## In Old Chicago

Screen play by Lamar Trotti and Sonya Levien, based on a story by Niven Busch, directed by Henry King, special effects scenes directed by H. Bruce Humberstone, photographed by Peverell Marley and Daniel B. Clark, music and lyrics by Mack Gordon and Harry Revel. Produced for Twentieth Century Fox by Darryl F. Zanuck, associate producer, Kenneth MacGowan.

### The Cast

Molly O'Leary .....	Alice Brady
Dion O'Leary .....	Tyrone Power
Jack O'Leary .....	Don Ameche
Belle Fawcett .....	Alice Faye
Gil Warren .....	Brian Donlevy
Pickle Bizby .....	Andy Devine
Bob O'Leary .....	Tom Brown
Senator Colby .....	Berton Churchill
Ann Colby .....	Phyllis Brooks
Gretchen .....	June Storey
General Phil Sheridan .....	Sidney Blackmer
Patrick O'Leary .....	J. Anthony Hughes
Specialty singer .....	Tyler Brooke
Mitch .....	Paul Hurst
Hattie .....	Madame Sultewan
Carrie Donahue .....	Thelma Manning
Bodyguard .....	Raymond Hatton

OUT of the dim but persistent legend of Mrs. O'Leary's cow has evolved a vigorous, lusty picture of the Chicago that was visited by the Great Fire back in the early '70s. It is a vivid pictorial chronicle of twenty important years in the history of the young giant of a town on Lake Michigan, following it from the days of mud

streets and plank sidewalks through two decades of phenomenal growth to the tremendous conflagration that raged over three and a half square miles and made ashes of billions of dollars' worth of property.

An O'Leary family has been created around which to rebuild this old Chicago—Patrick and his wife Molly and their three boys, covered-wagoning it across the prairie to the bustling young city where Pat expects to make his fortune. But Pat never gets there—a runaway horse drags him to death with Chicago just over the horizon, and Molly and the children have to make their way without him into, and in, the crude hustle of the town.

Molly—the Widow O'Leary—is the sort of decent, hearty and efficient woman who makes her way successfully. She creates a home, earns a living, and educates her boys, till the two elder ones are ready for the kind of careers their father dreamed of. They are a "strange tribe", the O'Learys, as they insist several times more than once, fighting among themselves, sticking together against others, with different and conflicting ideas of how to get along and what success is. Dion (Tyrone Power) goes in for politics, with a disarming smile and no scruples and a complete devotion to himself. Jack (Don Ameche) goes in for the law, civic right-

eousness and reform—also with a smile. Young Bob marries a pretty blonde immigrant and merely becomes a father.

A blonde of the Black Crook variety (Alice Faye), who shocks the conservative Widow O'Leary by singing in public in tights, a saloon-keeper political boss (Brian Donlevy) with a fine swirl of hair plastered down over his forehead, a Berton Churchillish scamp of a senator (Berton Churchill) and a fine, varied array of vivid Chicagoans, become involved in the rise of the O'Leary brothers, and furnish a racy background to their story. The story culminates in Jack's running for mayor on a reform ticket, with Dion secretly backing him and ensuring his election with the expectation of controlling him and the city afterwards. Just how the battle between the good and the bad in the O'Leary family would have come out can never be known, because the Widow's cow, Daisy, kicked over the lantern in her barn, and started the fire. Jack was killed by the falling wall of a building dynamited to halt the fire's spread, and Dion—well, he seemed to have learned something from the tragic disasters he had been through, and clung contritely to the woman he had hitherto used mainly as a helper in his political career while he listened to his mother's prophesy that a new and better Chicago would rise from the ashes of the old.

This story has its effective melodramatic twists and turns and surprises, but what lifts it above its level of melodrama is the wealth of atmospheric detail with which it is surrounded, and the really stupendous, terrifying fire. The picture teems with vigorous, picturesque people and events—the streets, with fascinating playbills outside the theatres, carts, fine carriages, horse-cars; the saloons, the Palmer House with silver dollars embedded in its floor, the election parades, Belle Fawcett's garish apartment and boudoir accoutrements, the chorus girls in Cupid costumes and in all-concealing bathing suits, the amazing panorama of mustachioed bartenders—countless vivid bits that create an astonishing whirl of reality. And the fire—Well, a whole book could hardly cover, and cover only pallidly, the immensity of that holocaust, which is surely screen spectacle at its topmost pitch. It is

something that only pictures, not words, can achieve.

If the picture has a weakness—and it is one that not many people will object to—it is the O'Leary brothers, who never quite seem to be grown men doing important things in the world. That is not from any lack of trying hard and earnestly and with plentiful assurance—it is just that they are so juvenilish and makeup-boxed, with such incredibly marvelous teeth always flashing. The other people are believably real, and it is particularly satisfying to see Alice Brady getting inside a solid character and doing something besides feckless twittering.

*Rated Honorable Mention.*

J.S.H.

## Peter the First

*Written by Alexei Tolstoy and Vladimir Petrov from novel by Tolstoy. Music by M. Cherbachev. Directed by Vladimir Petrov. A Lenfilm production. Distributed in the U. S. by Amkino.*

### The Cast

<i>Peter I</i> .....	<i>Nikolai Simonov</i>
<i>Alexei</i> .....	<i>Nikolai Cherkassov</i>
<i>Catherine</i> .....	<i>Alla Tarasova</i>
<i>Menshikov</i> .....	<i>M. Zharov</i>
<i>Sheremetiev</i> .....	<i>N. Tarkhanov</i>
<i>Businosssov</i> .....	<i>K. Gibchman</i>
<i>Fedka</i> .....	<i>V. Bobrovolski</i>
<i>Demidov</i> .....	<i>N. Rochefort</i>
<i>Brovkin</i> .....	<i>F. Bogdanov</i>
<i>Chapiro</i> .....	<i>N. Litvinov</i>
<i>Efronsinya</i> .....	<i>I. Zarubina</i>
<i>Jemov</i> .....	<i>Orlov</i>
<i>An old soldier</i> .....	<i>Larikov</i>

LENFILM'S choice of *Peter the Great* as the central figure in their new production fits neatly into the present political background of Russia. For the story of Peter's life and times can be made to present a certain analogy with the growth of Russia since the Revolution, and there can be no question that in *Peter the First* the authors have mixed in all the elements pertinent to a sympathetic comparison. But this has been done very cleverly and with plenty of restraint: few movie-goers will realize that the vastly impressive figure which holds them absorbed from start to finish is, in essence, as much Peter the Proletarian as Peter the Great. Nevertheless, the analogy is definitely there, and it is one that is worth examining before passing on to a description of the picture from the standpoint of entertainment.



The majority of the public, unfamiliar with the history of the period, will carry away a picture of Peter as a symbol of benevolent despotism—a vigorous patriot who failed to be humane only when foreign menaces or extreme provocation forced him to be ruthless. They will see a hearty, downright man with a tough outlook on life, but with a ready grin and laugh to show that he's very much a human being underneath. They will appreciate his boldness, sympathize with his great efforts to rebuild Russia, and admiringly put him down in their minds as a regular fellow with no time for show and ceremony. And, above all, they will be amazed at the acting of Nikolai Simonov, who succeeds most admirably in putting over a Peter who never existed.

For no matter how much one may admire the vast extent of Peter's work, history leaves no question as to the thoroughly unpleasant nature of the man himself. Lenfilm has carefully omitted the diabolical side of Peter's nature—the pleasure he took in

handling the executioner's ax himself at a mass execution; the tortures and punishments he applied to his opponents; his readiness to allow his son to be knouted to death; the huge toll of killings in his reign—in short, his complete disregard for human life. Soviet enthusiasts have often expressed their admiration for Peter; they have compared his task of yesterday to Stalin's today, and freely compared the two men. All of which should have made Lenfilm think twice before dressing Peter up as a Russian Wallace Beery.

So much for the historical, kill-joy attitude towards the picture. It must be admitted that from the point-of-view of entertainment the whitewashing of Peter doesn't matter a scrap, while the emphasizing of the proletarian atmosphere of the court actually helps to make this film totally different from the general run of historical pictures. Not only do we find a raw, immensely robust Tsar, as devoid of epaulettes and silk stockings as a blacksmith, but also outsize, bounc-



Nikolai Simonov in "Peter the First."

ing wenches in place of slim Empresses and court ladies; frame shacks and tavern hops instead of gorgeous palaces and elaborate minuets; vague smoky lights instead of the brilliance of crystal chandeliers, and dirty, odorous old boyars with tangled beards in the seat of Lord Plushbottom. And on the rare occasion when a little polish does make its appearance, it serves only an ignominious role—to look absurdly pretentious or thoroughly ridiculous. Peter is out to build a new Russia, and all that is not pertinent to his work is shown to us baldly in all its weakness and inaptness.

As Peter, Nikolai Simonov meets every requirement of so crude a setting. We see the whole story of his work unfold with him in the center of every major episode: the first scenes showing the storming of a fortress held by the Swedes; the realization that decisive victory can be obtained only by training every available man to fight, forge cannon, and to learn from the superior weapons of the enemy; the enlisting of merchants and nobles for the financing of new industries and projects; the ruthless tearing down of the huge church bells for smelting into arms; the building of the new capital, Petersburg, and finally the whole machine working vigorously to a great climax of its dictator's ambitions, with his country a great power, the enemy defeated, and the new peasant-empress the mother of an heir to Peter's reconstruction. It is all done in a now-slow-now-fast, patchy style, often with a carelessness of sequence which leaves you bewildered as to what exactly is happening, but never failing in the impressing of the main theme.

As for the supporting cast (the unfortunates who are doomed to do or die) each manages to appear as a genuine individual and to make an excellent showing despite the predominating effect of Peter, from the wretched Tsarevitch (Nikolai Cherkassov), who is a neat example of the intellectual reactionary; the Tsar's generalissimo (M. Zharov), down to the heavy muzhik who speaks for the peasantry and throws Peter on his back in a brawl. And finally there is some admirable photography with more unusual subject matter than you'd find in a month of Sundays.—N.D.

*Rated exceptional.*

## Merlusse

*Written, directed and produced by Marcel Pagnol, photographed by Albert Assouad, musical score by Vincent Scotto. Distributed in America by French Motion Picture Corporation.*

### The Cast

"Merlusse"	Henri Poupon
The Janitor	Rellys
The Principal	Andre Pollack
The Proctor	Thomeray
Catusse	F. Bruno
Godard	Robert Chaux
Villepontoux	Le Petit Jacques
Pic	John Dubrou
Macaque	Le-Van-Kim
Bezuquet	Rellys, Jr.
Molinar	Jean Inglesakis

"MERLUSSE" means "codfish", and it was the nickname given to one of the teachers in a Provencal boys' school that is the scene of this picture. It is an unusual picture that doesn't fit neatly into any cinematic category. There is a good deal of profundity to it, yet it hasn't the long stretch of background and build-up one expects of profound films, but rather the effect of a short story, where one series of incidents, all happening within a very brief time, has to create whatever background is necessary as it goes along, feeding you not only what you see at the moment but at the same time what you need for understanding what you see. There is something remarkable in the way the film succeeds in doing this.

It is a "Christmas Carol" kind of story, in which the Christmas spirit unexpectedly manifests itself in several people, to make—one may expect—considerable difference in the future course of their lives. On the afternoon of Christmas Eve, in a boys' school in Southern France, most of the pupils are going home for the holidays. Some of them are staying, either because they have no homes, or their homes are too far away, or because they are not wanted at home. An odd lot of hard-bitten realists, most of them, with the keen, cruel cynicism of youngsters who have to shift for themselves, and resourceful in battling for their rights in their own small world. The thing that makes having to spend Christmas Eve in the dismal, deserted school worse than it might have been is that they are put in charge of a teacher whom they particularly detest, a severe disciplinarian and martinet



whose glass eye (the result of the war) gives a monsterish outside look to a man whose general demeanor is grim and forbidding enough in itself. The gist of the story is the natural enmity between this teacher and these pupils, and how it was dispelled by a secret and unexpected exchange of Christmas gifts. It gradually appears that each of the hard-shelled kids has a response to kindness in him, and that the ogreish teacher is harsh and severe only out of self-protection, lest he be too soft and yielding to the boys for whose liking he is really hungry.

Such a tale as this is a fertile field for sentimentality, but hardly a spear of that noxious weed so much as shows its head. You learn, bit by bit, enough of why each boy is left stranded away from home at the season when home usually means most, and there is plenty to stir pity in many of the cases; but the boys themselves—each of them crisply and sharply individualized—seem to forbid any such soft emotion. Each has faced his problem and is handling it in his own way. As for “Merlusse”, he would be insulted if anyone were sorry for him. And so you have a picture that creates all its emotional effects by overtones, which in the end prove far more subtly effective than any direct assault upon the sympathies.

This picture, like all those of Marcel Pagnol's that have been shown here, has a curious disregard of the conventional styles of what they call “filmic” action. There will be such long stretches of people just sitting and talking that you wonder if the director knows what a motion picture camera is for, then suddenly comes a shot (like that of the boys' diningroom, with its interminable rows of empty tables, and way in the distance one table with the left-over boys sitting around it in the emptiness) that is worth a long, long chapter of explanatory words. M. Pagnol, it would appear, knows just what he is doing and why, whether it follows some one else's rules or not. His justification is the ultimate effect he gets, in this case a revelation of essential things in the lives of many people who all happen to converge in a single situation. Somehow he manages to convey, with remarkable clarity, material that might easily fill a long book, and all in a picture that spatially comes close

to the dimensions of an O. Henry short story.

Having both written and directed the picture he deserves most of the credit for its success. But probably he would be the last to deny the invaluable help he had from a cast of excellent actors, among them some of the most life-like boys the screen has shown.—J.S.H.

*Rated honorable mention.*

## Selected Pictures Guide

*(Continued from page 2)*

stead. Directed by Sam Nelson. Above the average Western. A youth joins the rangers to avenge his father's death and to get the murderer and the man who tortured him when a boy. Columbia.

- f PARADISE FOR THREE—Frank Morgan, Robert Young, Florence Rice. Novel by Erich Kastner. Directed by Edward N. Buzzell. A pleasant comedy, with a slight romantic tinge, in which a rich Viennese manufacturer and his daughter, and a young man who is always winning slogan contests, together with various others, all get involved in a comic plot, in an Alpine hotel. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

- m PENITENTIARY — Walter Connolly, John Howard, Jean Parker. Screen story by Martin Flavin. Directed by John Brahm. A grim but tense and impressive story of prison life, and its influence on a young man in for unintentional manslaughter. Important for the work of a hitherto unknown director with an individual, outstanding style. Columbia.

- f PURPLE VIGILANTES — Robert Livingston, Ray Corrigan. Based on story by William Colt MacDonald. Directed by George Sherman. The vigilantes formed to wipe out vice in a small Western town, give the idea to undesirables who continue to kill and destroy in the name of the vigilantes. A little above the average Western. Republic.

- fj\* SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS —Reviewed in Exceptional Photoplays Department of January.

- f SQUADRON OF HONOR—Don Terry, Mary Russell. Screen story by Martin Mooney. Directed by C. C. Coleman, Jr. A munitions maker tries to pin a murder on the commander of the American Legion in order to  
*(Continued on page 23)*

## Many Communities Represented at the Board Conference

COMMUNITY Motion Picture Organization reporting was the program for one session of the National Board of Review Conference, conducted as a panel discussion with delegates from many localities telling of their activities. The time was limited but within these brief periods of interchange of plans and programs each speaker gave something of helpful suggestion.

For the information of our readers not at the Conference we will publish two or three of these reportings in each forthcoming issue of the Magazine. We give here:

Mrs. Lewis P. Addoms, President  
Motion Picture Council for Brooklyn

TO understand the Brooklyn Council, you have to understand a little bit about the city. We have about two million people in Brooklyn. We have 250 public schools, approximately 450 Protestant churches and an equal number of Catholic and Jewish churches. We have civic groups, we have school Parent-Teacher Associations, and we have many newspapers and two hundred, plus, motion picture theatres.

As a council we are working through districts. Brooklyn is too big to work as a whole and we have divided the city into possibly eight or ten districts. We have in active operation now six of these districts. Each district covers a square mile or more, and each has approximately twenty schools, twenty churches, and maybe twenty motion picture theatres. In these districts all the work that pertains to the Council is done in detail through the district committees.

These district committees also have charge of photoplay public guides which deal with the theatres in each of the districts. These guides list the films that are being shown for that two-week period in these districts and nowhere else. So any mother who can read and has the desire to think, can find out just

where in her district there is a film suitable for her child, no matter what the age, because these recommendations are classified for age groups.

Then, from the administrative point of view, we have our Central Executive Committee. This Committee formulates our policies and gets out other lists which are applicable to all Brooklyn. We take the lists and resumés that you people as National reviewing agents get out. We study them in a committee, a large committee, and we make our own deductions from them. We take the differences of opinion and toss them over. We think about our problem here in Brooklyn, about our mixed population, which is different from a country population, and when these guides come out they are applicable to our people as we know them.

In addition, in case anyone escapes these published guides, we issue also in our large metropolitan daily, the Brooklyn Eagle, a column about a foot long once a week, which gives a resumé of every film shown in Brooklyn over the week-end that has value or that is presented in enough of our theatres to make it worth while.

If seven theatres present the same film, and they do, because we block our theatres in groups, that would be seven times two thousand, or fourteen thousand people who might possibly be in those audiences, and we want those fourteen thousand people to have some place to look. So we publish, I think, enough material for almost everybody to be caught in one trap or another.

Then, on the side of education we have monthly meetings of the Council. The district committees have their own meetings, but we have a monthly meeting of the Council, open to the public, to which we always invite the representatives of all schools, all churches, and anyone civic-minded enough to want to come. At these open monthly meetings we provide speakers to bring to



our groups something that will help them. In Brooklyn, with our mixed population, we have to teach discrimination and selection. We have, as you know, a law in this great City of New York, whereby any child of eight can go alone, without a guardian of any kind whatsoever, to the motion picture house, may stay as long as he desires, five, six hours, if he happens to have a mother who is working and wants him to do that, and see the film over and over again. He may take with him by the hand his two-year-old and three-year-old brother or sister and there they sit in rows and the manager says, "What can we do?"

We, as a Brooklyn council, are definitely responsible for what these children see. We say to the public, "We are your officer between the industry and you. That is what we want and we will do our utmost to put it to the producer so we will have the right kind of films for you." That is our message to our Brooklyn people and we must be absolutely loyal to our trust.

We have one great responsibility, and it is this: When great films, *Victoria the Great*, *Louis Pasteur* and others of that type, are shown, in nine cases out of ten they are combined with some film we cannot recommend. Here we are, gathered from New Orleans to New York, Rochester to Cleveland, St. Louis to Toledo. Can we not, as a group of thinking people, as mothers, as civic-minded women, who, as our panel leader has said, protect the home—can we not as home-making women in charge of our children, work together from all parts of the country to bring pressure—let us not say pressure—rather bring pleading, tears, if you want, to producers to make them, when they give *Victoria the Great*, give us something with it that we can advertise as well?

We cannot recommend a good thing plus a bad thing. We cannot say, "Children, come home when the good thing is over." They do not. Now, we do not ask for a great or costly second picture. That would not be fair, but give us simply something with those fine films that meets the standards that you and I and every other you and I in this country feel comes up to the standard of normal and wholesome entertainment.

MRS. JOSEPH E. FRIEND, President  
Louisiana Council for Motion Pictures,  
New Orleans

The name Louisiana Council for Motion Pictures is perhaps a little misleading. We are not quite yet a Louisiana Council. We are very young, but it is our ambition to extend our work throughout the State. We have, however, the cooperation of our State Superintendent of Education, who has sent out throughout the State his endorsement of the movement for better motion pictures.

Our Council is composed of about sixty organizations of various kinds and degrees. We have at least twenty of the public schools' Mothers Clubs represented in our council. We have the patriotic organizations, the religious groups, and the American Legion groups. The chairman of the educational department of our Council is the head of one of our largest schools in the City of New Orleans.

We have the monthly meetings, as you have, at which we have reviews and round table discussions of the current films. We have also one feature that I have not heard discussed here, that is, we have from the schools, usually from the high schools, two of the students who come to us and give us their own point of view on the current motion pictures. This has proved a very attractive feature of our meetings.

Recently we had the distinction of having the premier showing of *The Buccaneer*, which, as you may know, is the history of the Battle of New Orleans, of 1812. Just as an indication of what the motion picture means as an educational feature, may I say our libraries and schools were swamped following the showing of this picture with demands for material on the history of Louisiana. It sent the children back to their history to find out just how accurate the film was and it whetted their appetite to know more about it. Mr. Cecil DeMille was there, and the gentleman who took the part of Andrew Jackson appeared at our meeting. It was quite a thrill to see Andrew Jackson come alive in New Orleans.

Others who reported activities at the Conference to be heard from later are:

Mrs. L. R. Andrews, President, Jacksonville Motion Picture Council; Mrs. Jesse

Bader, National Conference of Jews and Christians, Motion Picture Committee Federated Church Women, N. Y.; Mrs. Piercy Chestney, President, Macon Better Films Committee; Miss Eleanor Child, Faculty Advisor, Photoplay Club of Greenwich, Conn. High School; Miss Kathleen Crowley, Director, Waterbury Connecticut Girls' Club; Mrs. Rachel Davis-DuBois, Director, Commission on Intercultural Education, Progressive Education Association, N. Y.; Mrs. W. V. Fiske, President, Cleveland Cinema Club; Mrs. V. J. Guthery, President, Charlotte Motion Picture Council; Mrs. James F. Loomam, Chairman, Motion Picture Department, International Federation of Catholic Alumnae, N. Y.; Mrs. Richard M. McClure, President, Better Films Council of Chicago; Mrs. W. O. Merrill, President Greater Detroit Motion Picture Council; Mrs. Charles T. Owens, President, Philadelphia Motion Picture Forum; Mrs. William Platt, Executive Committee, Schools Motion Picture Committee, N. Y. C.; Mrs. Alonzo Richardson, Secretary, Atlanta Board of Review; Mrs. S. S. Sutherland, Michigan State and Detroit Chairman of Motion Pictures Federated Church Women; Mrs. Lionel Sutro, Chairman, Manhattan Division, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, N. Y.; Mrs. Charles W. Swift, Chairman, New York State D. A. R. Better Films Committee, President Elmira (N. Y.) Motion Picture Council; Miss Beatrice Tripp, President, Rochester Better Films Council.

Many other communities were represented through the attendance at the Conference of Miss Kathryn Y. Allebach, Director, Motion Picture Clubs, Reading, Pa.; Mrs. Raymond R. Bear, Allentown, Better Films Chairman, Pennsylvania State D. A. R.; Mr. Albert Benham, Director, Moving Picture Department, National Council for Prevention of War, Washington, D. C.; Mrs. George W. Brune, Chairman, Better Films Committee, Contemporary Club, Newark, N. J.; Mrs. W. H. Burns, Junior Matinee Program Chairman, Jacksonville Motion Picture Council; Mrs. A. A. Condon, Yonkers, N. Y. Motion Picture Council; Mrs. William H. Cornwell, Chairman, Motion Picture Committee, Philadelphia Federation of Wo-

men's Clubs and Allied Organizations; Mrs. M. R. DeLong, President, Toledo Motion Picture Council; Mrs. F. W. Fredericks, Forest Hills-Kew Gardens, N. Y. Motion Picture Council; Mrs. W. L. Gilbert, Motion Picture Chairman Cobleskill, N. Y., New Century Club; Mrs. George Holderer, President, Motion Picture Council, Scarsdale, N. Y.; Mrs. W. P. Hollowell, Secretary, Tallahassee Motion Picture Council; Mrs. Loring D. Jones, Better Films Committee, Rockville Centre, N. Y.; Mrs. Charles H. Marden, Grosse Pointe, Michigan, Motion Picture Council; Mrs. Frank E. Nicklaus, Better Films Committee, Women's Division Chamber of Commerce of Oranges and Maplewood, N. J.; Mrs. George L. Schwartz, Delaware Parent-Teachers Association and Girl Reserves, Y.W.C.A., Wilmington, Delaware; Mrs. Dennis C. Shea, President, Elizabeth, N. J., Council for Better Films; Dr. Florence Brown Sherbon, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas; Mr. John J. Spencer, Chief, Licensing Div. Boston, Mass.; Mrs. Wilder Tileston, New Haven, Conn., Council of Theatre Patrons; Miss Letitia B. Webster, Baltimore, Maryland; and still many others.

Others unable to attend who sent material for display and distribution were: Mrs. Lawrence S. Akers, President, Better Films Council of Memphis; Mrs. W. E. Beverley, Alma Michigan Better Films Council; Mrs. W. E. Bibee, Secretary, Knoxville Motion Picture Council; Mrs. M. Eaton Briggs, Chairman Photo Play Guide, Burlington Vermont Better Films Council; Mrs. William Burk, President, Southern California Motion Picture Council, Los Angeles; Mrs. A. F. Burt, President, St. Louis Better Films Council; Mrs. Frances Cheney, Secretary, Film League of Nashville; Miss Elsie Clananhan, Motion Picture Chairman, Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs; Mrs. J. W. Conger, Motion Picture Chairman, Mississippi Federation of Women's Clubs, Winona; Mrs. Samuel Cuthbert, Chairman, Motion Pictures, Southwestern District, Pennsylvania Federation of Women's Clubs, Pittsburgh; Mrs. Odessa Davis, Motion Picture Chairman, California Federation Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Los Angeles; Dr. Vera



George, Motion Picture Chairman, California Federation of Women's Clubs, San Diego; Mr. E. J. Gratz, Editor, The Epworth Herald, Chicago; Mrs. Christian C. Gross, President, Ohio Motion Picture Council, Columbus; Mr. Paul L. Harrup, Chairman Motion Picture Council Oklahoma Parent Teacher Congress, Oklahoma City; Mrs. Josephine Haug, Chairman, Sacramento, California, Better Films Board; Mrs. R. H. Jaquith, Chairman, Emporia, Kansas, Film Council; Mrs. J. W. Livingston, President, Better Films Council of Grand Rapids and Kent County, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Mrs. Peter G. Pulakos, Erie, Pennsylvania, Better Films Council; Mrs. David H. Ray, Chairman of Better Films, National Society of New England Women, Arcadia, California; Mrs. Clifton L. Thornley, Motion Picture Chairman, Rhode Island Federation of Women's Clubs, Pawtucket; Mrs. John Vruwink, Motion Picture Chairman, Los Angeles Branch American Association of University Women.

The Conference Committee represented other communities through the membership of: Mrs. Hubbell J. Adams, President, South Buffalo Better Films Council, Buffalo, N. Y.; Mrs. J. C. Buckland, Chairman, Wisconsin Motion Picture Commission, Milwaukee; Mrs. J. W. Corrington, Better Films Council, Miami, Fla.; Mrs. James A. Craig, Jacksonville Motion Picture Council; Prof. Sawyer Falk, Syracuse University, N. Y.; Prof. Henry D. Gray, Stanford University, California; Mrs. Harry G. Grover, Better Films Council, Rutherford, N. J.; Mrs. O. J. Haller, Motion Picture Chairman, Pennsylvania Federation of Women's Clubs, Pittsburgh; Mrs. Carl W. Hill, Better Films Council, Tampa, Florida; Rev. J. N. Hillhouse, Phoenix, Arizona; Dr. John A. Hollinger, Director of Visualization, Pittsburgh Public Schools; Mrs. N. Irving Hyatt, President, Spartanburg, S. C. Better Films Committee; Mrs. H. M. Jennison, President, Better Films Council of Knoxville; Mrs. Alonzo Klaw, Schools Motion Picture Committee, New York City; Mrs. Helen S. MacPherson, Better Films Club, Hartford, Conn.; Mrs. Frank J. Shutts, Parent Education Association, Oneonta, N. Y.; Dr. Francis D. Tyson, University of Pittsburgh.

## Selected Pictures Guide

(Continued from page 19)

bargain with him for the legion influence against a government bill for arms control. The background is a national Legion convention, and all the legionnaires are enlisted en masse to find the real criminal. Columbia.

- f SWING YOUR LADY—Nat Pendleton, Louise Fazenda, Humphrey Bogart. Play by Kenyon Nicholson and Charles Robinson. Directed by Ray Enright. Against a comic hill-billy background a novel romance blossoms between a Greek wrestler and a native lady-blacksmith. Fresh and rowdyish, with a fast succession of hearty laughs. Warner Bros.
- f TELEPHONE OPERATOR—Judith Allen, Grant Withers. Screen story by John Kraft. Directed by Scott Pembroke. Two comedy linesmen installing a line under a boss who is having matrimonial trouble, with storm and flood to complicate the human problems. Monogram.

## SHORT SUBJECTS

### INFORMATIONALS

- f BEHIND THE CRIMINAL (Crime Doesn't Pay Series)—An effective exposition of how an unscrupulous lawyer can sometimes defeat justice. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f CADET CHAMPIONS—Physical training at West Point. Columbia.
- fj GOING PLACES NO. 45—Lowell Thomas takes us to the ends of the world and shows us the strange people on a small island off the coast of Sumatra. Also shows the doll industry in New England. Universal.
- fj I PLEDGE MY HEART—A pictorial record of the pilgrimage to Washington of the delegates to the 11th Annual 4-H Club Camp. A vividly interesting picture of America's youth in contact with our capitol's historical significance, with an honest patriotic uplift to it. Story by Emerson Yorke. Directed by Emerson Yorke. Division of Motion Pictures, Department of Agriculture.
- f INDIA'S MILLIONS (Newman's Travelogue)—Caste and customs, in color. Vitaphone.
- f JULOTTAN (Christmas Morn in the Country)—Pleasant Swedish country scenes. Scandinavian Talking Picture.
- f MALAYAN JUNGLES (Newman's Travelogue)—Pigmies and profits in Malaya, in color. Vitaphone.
- f \*MARCH OF TIME NO. 6—A most interesting film showing the present day Germany under Hitler's leadership. RKO Radio.
- f ORJANSLATENS STAD (City of St. George's Carol)—A beautifully photographed church service at Christmas. Scandinavian Talking Picture.
- f PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 6—New buildings in Washington; Arizona's magic cave; racing greyhounds. Paramount.
- fj POPULAR SCIENCE NO. 3—Done in color showing cardboard house models taken from the blueprints; flint miners; modern kitchen with labor saving devices; a farmer who plows by remote control; live chinchillas; putting out an oilwell fire. Paramount.
- fj SKI FLIGHT—Fine skiing by Otto Laing. Vitaphone.
- fj SNOW FOOLIN'—Winter sports and particularly ice sports, with a remarkable skater on stilts. Columbia.

(Continued on next page)

## Selected Pictures Guide

(Continued from previous page)

- f STRANGER THAN FICTION NO. 46—Strange things and people; expert bowler who is blind; mechanical orange sorter; haven for canaries; some well mannered pigs. Universal.
- fj \*TRAILING ANIMAL STORIES—Common and uncommon wild animals in captivity, all of them interesting and some remarkably so. 20th Century-Fox.
- fj VITAPHONE PICTORIAL REVIEW NO. 5—Making ice-cream; training of jockeys; modes. Vitaphone.

### CARTOONS AND COMEDIES

- fj BOAT BUILDERS—Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and Goofy build a boat. RKO Radio.
- f HIS PEST FRIEND—Leon Errol. A funny comedy in which a man's busy-body friend throws a suspicious light on a secret surprise the man's wife is preparing for him. RKO Radio.
- f HOLLYWOOD PICNIC (Color Cartoon)—Amusing for its caricatures of popular players. Columbia.
- fj LION HUNT, THE (Terrytoon Cartoon)—The mouse that saved a lion that had spared its life. The interjection of a commentator's voice gives an uncommon angle of humor to it. Educational.
- fj LITTLE BUCK CHEESER (Cartoon)—Little Buck Cheeser, a mouse, takes a Buck Rogers sort of trip to the moon to find out if it is made of green cheese. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f MAIL AND FEMALE ("Our Gang" Comedy)—Alfalfa, though a professed woman-hater, has to masquerade as a girl. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj MY LITTLE BUCKAROO (Merrie Melodies)—Cartoon. Vitaphone.
- fj PORKY AT THE CROCADERO (Loony Tunes)—Cartoon. Vitaphone.
- fj SELF CONTROL (Disney Cartoon)—Donald Duck tries to learn self control but fails. RKO Radio.

### MUSICALS, NOVELTIES AND SERIALS

- f BOLTED DOOR, THE (Floyd Gibbons "Your True Adventures" Series)—Suspense-tale of a little girl accidentally shut into a bathroom with water running. Vitaphone.
- f CANDID CAMERA MANIACS (Pete Smith Specialty)—Dealing (with some humor) with the craze for candid camera shots. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj COMMUNITY SING NO. 3—Devoted to college songs. Columbia.
- fj LONE RANGER, THE (Serial) No. 1—Starring Lee Powell and Herman Brix. This serial of the pioneer days starts off well. All but one of a band of rangers are wiped out by the outlaws and the lone ranger swears vengeance. Plenty of excitement with Silver, the beautiful white horse, as a symbol of law and order. Republic.
- f MEET THE MAESTROS—Swing bands and their leaders. Paramount.
- f PERSONALITY PARADE—Jimmy Fidler brings some old-time players back to the screen—some retired and some dead. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f SCREEN SNAPSHOTS NO. 4—A big turnout of screen stars to see tennis super-stars in a fine exhibition. Columbia.
- j TIM TYLER'S LUCK (Serial) NOS. 10-12—Starring Frankie Thomas and Frances Robinson. The end of this serial. The villains are caught, the girl gets the confession she wanted, and the ivory patrol finds the elephant's burial ground. Universal.
- f WHAT DO YOU THINK NO. 2—An oddly mysterious little tale of how a young husband was cured of jealousy. Was it by a dream, or by a visitation from another world? Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj ZORRO RIDES AGAIN (Serial) No. 12—Starring John Carroll and Helen Christian. Zorro's identity revealed and the difficulties against opening up the railroad finally removed. Republic.

## NATIONAL MOTION PICTURE COUNCIL

The community or field work of the National Board of Review is conducted under its National Motion Picture Council, through affiliated membership groups, service contact groups and correspondents throughout the country. The National Council assists in the organization and program of work of local groups which are usually called Councils.

These Councils follow a plan initiated by the National Board in 1916 of having a membership composed of representatives from many organizations, cultural, educational, recreational, religious, and civic, so that they typify the original movement for community participation in the development and best use of the motion picture as recreation and education.

The objectives of such organizations are as follows:

To demonstrate through the education of public opinion, the effectiveness of selection and classification, instead of censorship, as a means of forwarding the development of the motion picture and its best uses.

To encourage through open meetings, forums, classes and other means, the study of the motion picture as a medium of entertainment, education and artistic expression.

To concentrate the attention of the public on specific worthwhile films through the publication of a Photo-play Guide to the selected pictures being currently shown at local theatres.

To arrange family Friday night or week-end programs of selected films, and junior matinees of pictures particularly suited to the tastes of children, through co-operation with local exhibitors.

To endorse and further the use of visual education through motion pictures in the schools.

To arrange and promote occasional exhibitions of exceptional and cultural films that would not normally be shown in the commercial theatres.

### PUBLICATIONS

The National Board of Review and its Council as an aid to the groups carrying out these objectives furnishes an informational service through its publications.

National Board of Review Magazine (monthly)

\$2.00 a year for individual subscriptions

\$1.00 a year to Council or club groups

Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures

\$2.50 a year when taken alone, available at a special rate of \$1.00 in conjunction with the Magazine.

Selected Pictures Catalog (annual) 25c

Special Film Lists 10c ea.

Such as Selected Films for Children's Showings, Selected Book-Films, Educational Films, etc.

National Board of Review—Its Background, Growth and Present Status. free

National Board of Review—How It Works. free

A Plan and a Program for Community Motion Picture Councils 10c



# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

Vol. XIII, No. 3



March, 1938



*The arrival of the new tramp in "Merrily We Live" (see page 10)*

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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

fj \*ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER — Tommy Kelly, Jackie Moran, May Robson, Walter Brennan. Story by Mark Twain. Directed by Norman Taurog. A bright and colorful picturization of Mark Twain's book, faithfully done in incidents and atmosphere. United Artists.

m ARSENE LUPIN RETURNS — Melvyn Douglas, Warren William, Virginia Bruce. Screen story by James K. McGuinness, Howard E. Rogers and George H. Cox. Directed by George Fitzmaurice. A deft and light-moving mystery melodrama, in which the famous French thief created by Maurice LeBlanc keeps you amused and guessing till the very end, with an American detective always close on his trail. Metro Goldwyn Mayer.

m BARONESS AND THE BUTLER, THE — William Powell, Annabella. Based on play by Ladislaus Bus-Fekete. Directed by Walter Lang. An amusing farce of a butler whose ambitions carry him into parliament and into the arms of the baroness. The scene is Budapest. William Powell as the ambitious butler and Henry Stephenson as Count Sandor are both excellent. 20th Century Fox.

f BIG BROADCAST OF 1938—W. C. Fields, Martha Raye. Based on story by Frederick Hazlitt Brennan. Directed by Mitchell Leisen. An amusing and lavish production with most of the action taken aboard an ultra modern liner. There are some good song hits and the dancing is excellent. Paramount.

f BLONDES AT WORK—Glenda Farrell, Barton MacLane. Screen story by Albert DeMonde. Directed by Frank MacDonald. A pleasant item of the Torchy Blane series, with a mysterious murder and an accompanying comic mystery—an entertaining blend of comedy and melodrama in the amusing love-life of a newspaper girl and her detective fiancé. Warner Bros.

f \*BRINGING UP BABY—Katherine Hepburn, Cary Grant. Collier's Magazine story by Hagar Wilde. Directed by Howard Hawks. An amusing farce of a scatter-brain girl who becomes the jinx of a sedate young professor and their lively time with a leopard. Full of funny episodes and with clever dialogue. RKO-Radio.

fj FORBIDDEN VALLEY — Noah Beery, Frances Robinson. Screen story and direction by Wyndham Gittens. A western story of catching wild mustangs to sell. The horses are nice and there are some beautiful photographic shots. Universal.

f GOLD IS WHERE YOU FIND IT—George Brent, Claude Rains, Olivia de Havilland, Tim Holt. Magazine story by Clements Ripley. Directed by Michael Curtiz. A vivid picture of California in the '70s and the struggle of grain-growers against gold-miners, whose mines spewed their debris down into the valleys and ruined the crops. There is a spectacular flood at the end, and the effectiveness of the whole thing is enhanced by color. First National.

f \*GOLDWYN FOLLIES, THE — Adolphe Menjou, Andrea Leeds, Vera Zorina, Kenny Baker. Screen story by Ben Hecht, with George Gershwin music. Directed by George Marshall. Around the principles, who provide a plot about Hollywood with a dash of romance, is a wealth of varied talent—Helen Jepson and Charles Kullman for grand opera singing, the American Ballet, Ella Logan for swing, and comedians like the Ritz Bros., Charlie McCarthy and Phil Baker furnishing some of the heartiest laughs of the season. Vastly entertaining and beautifully produced in Technicolor. United Artists.

f GREEN FIELDS — Michael Goldstein, Helen Beverly. Screen story by Peretz Hirshbein. Directed by Jacob Ben-Ami. A picture in Jewish with English titles. A simple and sincere pastoral story of Jewish peasants in old Russia, and about a young scholar who first created a quarrel between two families and then brought them together again. Collective Film Producers, Inc.

f \*HAPPY LANDING—Sonja Henie, Don Ameche, Ethel Merman, Cesar Romero. Screen story by Milton Sperling and Boris (Continued on page 13)



# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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## Monthly Group Discussion

BY way of obtaining a cross-section of popular opinion regarding the many interesting factors in the field of motion pictures, the Editors of the Magazine have decided to ask all Groups affiliated with, or interested in the work of the National Board, to cooperate in supplying material. We propose that each group, either at its monthly meeting or at any time convenient to its members, debate upon a topic which shall be chosen every month by the Editors. On conclusion of the debate a brief (not more than 500 words if possible) report of its results, plus mention of any outstanding comment made by members, should be sent to the Monthly Group Discussion Editor. All reports will be carefully read and incorporated into an article which will be published in a subsequent issue of the Magazine. Whenever possible the Editors will quote direct from reports and will always list the names of groups participating in the debate. Each topic will be open to discussion for at least one month after the publication date of the issue in which it is announced.

To increase the interest of the Topic it will, whenever possible, have some connection with articles accompanying it in the Magazine. In this number, for instance, readers will note three articles, one by Mr. Ward Marsh, one by Mr. Alistair Cooke and one by Mr. Mark van Doren, all three of them professional critics of the motion picture. Mr. Cooke discusses popular criticism; the problem of unbiased judgment, and the need for critics who are truly in

tune with popular feeling. Mr. Marsh writes of his experiences as a Mid-West critic for sixteen years, pointing out the great difficulties that stand in the way of the critic when he tries to arouse popular interest in a picture that has not caught on. Mr. Van Doren warns us against voting the critic's opinion higher than the box-office's. These three writers seem to agree that the relation between the public and the critic is not always a happy one—that it is often more of a mutual disagreement than a mutual interest in the cinema. So, allowing for the occasions on which the box-office and the critic agree, we suggest for discussion this month:

### WHETHER THE BOX-OFFICE JUDGMENT SHOWS MORE INTELLIGENCE THAN THE CRITIC?

Naturally the answer to this question depends largely upon the individual critic, so the whole question should be treated mainly from the standpoint of the group's own experience. It may also cover any points relevant to the whole question of public choice and outside criticism.

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Next month's Topic, also, will be based upon articles appearing in the Magazine, of which the writers will be: Professor Mortimer J. Adler, author of "Art and Prudence," etc.; Mr. Edgar Anstey and Mr. Paul Rotha, authorities on the Documentary Film. The Editors will welcome any suggestions as to possible Topics for future months and hope that readers will write any criticism or comment they may wish to make for publication in a Correspondence Section.

# The Movies as Entertainment

By MARK VAN DOREN

*From an address delivered at the National Board Conference. Mr. Van Doren is film critic of The Nation and Professor of English at Columbia University.*

WHEN asked what my subject was going to be today, I said that I would like to talk about the word "entertainment" in connection with the art of the motion picture. My principal feeling in regard to this is that all pictures should be entertaining. Now frequently people interpret the word "entertainment" in a very limited fashion, and I should like to protest against this, since for me there are no limitations to that word. The whole duty of a movie, as of any work of art, is to entertain its audience, and when we use the word in its limited sense it means that we have not stopped to consider its whole meaning. This meaning, however, can be restored to us a little if we look at its etymology, from which we learn that for a thing to entertain us is simply to "hold" us. That is what the word means—to hold. Shall we say that something holds the work of art to the person perceiving it, and vice versa? If a work is a work of art it holds us; to me there is no other function for any work of art. The only function of a book is to be interesting, and I have never heard of any other function which makes sense.

The results of using the word "entertainment" in a limited sense are frequently disastrous. There are artists who say: "Well, today we are going to be merely entertaining," and they mean by that, of course, that they are going to entertain us with less of the equipment than they could use. Really, they are going to be only *partly* entertaining.

Now a movie or book which is merely entertaining is not entertaining enough. It is not interesting enough; what it does not entertain is the mind. The mind, I suppose, is the only thing that is ever being entertained by any work of art. On the other hand, from time to time, creators of works of art—that is, writers of books, poems, plays, or producers of movies—announce that they

intend to go "beyond" entertainment, and teach us something. Or they produce, for instance, *The Good Earth*, not with the desire to produce a movie first and last, not with the desire to produce the most entertaining, interesting, "holding" thing they can, but with some entirely irrelevant idea such as that a movie ought to be true to the book whose title it bears.

Or they say, perhaps: "China is an important subject and therefore this movie must be important." Not interesting; they do not use that word at all, but stick to important. The result is, for me at any rate, a dull movie: *The Good Earth*, terribly overcrowded, terribly pretentious, lacking unity, lacking that kind of warmth which any work of art has to have before it can hold us.

The idea behind all this is to be more than entertaining. But this idea I find to be just as fatuous and just as vicious as the idea of being merely entertaining—or, to use my paraphrase, less than entertaining.

The trouble with producers who want to go beyond entertainment is that they fail to realize that they cannot go beyond entertainment until they have reached it—until they have reached its limit. The limits of entertainment, however, are the limits of art (if my definition is correct) and there is no way of going beyond them.

I do not believe that anything can be more entertaining than *Hamlet*. Nothing is better, nothing, surely, gets very much farther than *Hamlet* does towards the limits of art. It is entertaining to all kinds of persons, entertaining to the mind, entertaining to the heart, the liver, lungs and everything else that we have. It is my example of a very good work of art, and it is a completely entertaining work of art.

It could easily be said that I am flattering a great mass of movie goers in America and elsewhere by assuming that they have the same capacity to be entertained by a variety of things that you or I have. It is supposed to be quite clear that for the mass of movie goers, movies had better be merely enter-



taining, because the masses need something less than whole entertainment. I do not believe that. I do not believe that my taste is any better than that of millions of other people. If I suspect it is from time to time, it remains no more than a suspicion: I have no evidence. As a matter of fact I believe that the taste of a great many people over a great period of time is likely to be better than mine.

That mass taste is what has given me ideas as to which are the important books. The taste of a great many people decided that Shakespeare was a good writer, and that Homer and Plato were good writers. This decision was not reached merely by a few people. It was the achievement of a general judgement operating over a very long period of time.

I believe that that same validity of judgement resides in the American people even now. In the past it has often confounded

the supposedly superior authorities on art. It told the professors, for instance, that Mark Twain was an author. Fifty, forty, thirty years ago the professors did not realize that at all. They thought Mark Twain was merely entertaining. They had that snobbish fear of their own pleasure which a great many people, I daresay, will always have. I tend to believe that it is very dangerous for any individual at any time—no matter who he is: critic, producer, owner of a theater or of a chain of theaters, or anything else—to assume he knows exactly what his taste is and, furthermore, that he knows what the taste of the American people is, and that he knows the one taste is different from the other and superior or inferior to the other.

Many difficulties in criticism would be obviated, I think, by an admission on the part of all of us that in the world of movies the word "good" means entertaining.

## Movies and Popular Criticism

By ALISTAIR COOKE

*From an address delivered at the Conference of the National Board of Review. Mr. Cooke is NBC Dramatic Critic, Contributing Author of "Footnotes to the Film"; Editor of "Garbo and the Night Watchman."*

FOUR other speakers at this Conference have agreed on certain things: they have said that what is opposite to good popular films is pseudo-artistic films. But I think there is another distinction which is more apt to my subject. It is not my own. It has been made by a critic who would make no claim to being a popular critic, his mind is rather that of a first-rate medieval Catholic. He notices the distinction between popular movies and pseudo-popular movies and has made the very excellent remark that Bing Crosby singing about 'Empty Saddles in the Old Corral' would seem to be a popular theme, but that, however, the emotion of Bing Crosby singing about 'Empty Saddles in the Old Corral' is essentially a private emotion. It is no more a popular emotion than that enjoyed by a tired man sitting in a burlesque house.

It is a private emotion which no mental intimacy with his spouse will ever probe, and it is curious that we have got the words 'popular' and 'private' mixed. In fact, I feel what is needed after these talks at the Conference is for some neurologist and psychologist to get together to find out what the word 'popular' means.

The second point I should like to pick up is that of the speaker who talked about movies being a business. I think it was Douglas Churchill who said the trouble with the critics is that they get up on platforms and say, "Of course the movies are for the people, to hell with art," but at the end of four minutes they are talking about works of art. He said the movies are a business and not a crusade. Well, Hollywood knows that, but Hollywood also hides behind that, and I want to try just to suggest or examine some of the conditions which bring about this great popular form of entertainment. Hollywood is primarily committed to certain business principles. They are not primarily

artistic ideas. It may say "We are out to make good movies," but what it told Fritz Lang was, "Eight million dollars cannot be wrong." The basic cause for congratulation last year was the fact that movies in the United States yielded a profit of \$37,000,000. Movies are made to sell and anybody who girds that fact is certainly an esthete. They have to be made to a very precise limit. In fact, if the movies *are* art, they are the most severe and severely captious form of art since Greek tragedies, which were comparatively untidy pieces of popular and academic material thrown together. For instance, a movie must be about 90 minutes long. Pare Lorentz made "The Plow That Broke the Plains." The exhibitors who saw it looked at their watches and said, "The man has gone crazy. It lasts twenty minutes. Go away, make it into a movie, do something, make it into ninety minutes. If you cannot do that, go hire yourself a hall. We will not show it. Everybody knows a movie lasts ninety minutes. There is no other way."

When they have been put out according to many more queasy conditions they eventually get shown to the critics. And the critic, too, has his limits of expression. I do not believe there can be with the present set-up such a thing as a popular critic who has the freedom to say what he chooses. He is earning his bread and butter. The advertising on the page which shares his review produces considerable revenue for the paper. So he has to retire into the comparative safety of talking about the plot, which excites nobody,—especially in print. He is criticising something which has been put out to make money, with the shape of ninety minutes, something which has had to go through a collective of fifteen or twenty men (which may or may not be a good thing). Finally both the producer and the critic are handcuffed together by the third limit, namely, pre-production censorship. It is pre-production censorship which, more than anything else, gets in the way of the movies being good vulgar art. It gets in the way with its cosy refined standards and says, "No, no, that word is not spoken by genteel Americans." You may say, "This movie is not about genteel Americans. It is about a

couple of truck drivers, or gobs, or vaudeville dancers. By implication the reply is, "Well, the sooner they stop saying that the better."

That is about as far as you get. And you may wonder why this should be. Well, I think it is very important to bear in mind the social history of the movies and of the men who made them; that a great many people engaged in movies are out to swing something socially and their cultural and social ambitions fuse on a level of nauseating gentility, and it is their products we have to take.

Bearing these obstacles in mind a movie critic may doubtfully ask the question,—is it possible to write good sense in words of one syllable for an audience of two hundred million people? In any other art, the answer from the critics would be an indignant No. Because the critic of painting, music, even theatre has long been encouraged to think of himself—like Pater—as a professional alchemist distilling essences, and in his best writing he would consider that he had bottled for posterity the essence of Leonardo, essence of Michelangelo, essence of Toscanini, essence of Ina Claire.

But the movies are the first art made for the many by the many, or if it's documentary film, about the many by the few. A great popular critic would be one who found the most telling common denominator for two-thirds of a nation. For these are the people who see movies, who hiss them and laugh at them, who argue and cry over them. Popular and effective movie criticism must start from the thing up on the screen without bothering overmuch about what has been said or done with this sort of movie before. It is often expected of movie critics, especially in England or France, that they shall qualify for their job by knowing the technical and ideological history of the cinema. They begin to rate as soon as they develop a literary style which will seem to clothe the movies in an aura of culture and respectability. In the United States, it's still thought to be in the nature of promotion to move up from movie critic to theatre critic. But to be a good movie critic it is necessary to be independent of any tradition of criticism; and it is cer-



tainly the barest self-respect not to look on your job as an apprenticeship. There is a sense in which no good movie critic would ever establish or continue any tradition of criticism. At his best he would be no more than a man with the average man's intelligence sharpened to a point of great clarity. A great popular critic would share the virtues and weaknesses of his audience. He might be Will Rogers, I doubt if he could be Edmund Wilson or Ernest Newman. He might be—and perhaps is—Don Herold. For a movie-critic is bound to see sooner or later that he is wasting his time if his eye is on a literary reputation. This is a special condition of movie criticism. Just as minority literacy was doomed by the invention of printing, minority culture has been doomed for ever by the invention of the newspaper, the movies and the radio. These media may appear to do little about it. But they are not wholly to blame. They have taken their cue from the educators—who in these matters hesitate, hold back and coast on a sneer. The movies especially still carry with them the faint perfume of nickelodeons and flea-circuses. Whereas what our universities too often demand before knowledge is respectability in the materials they examine.

There is the danger of a similar attitude in any organization such as yours which has the courage to take over part of the work the educators should be doing. If you are acting as a Book of the Month club, you are emasculating an art with a chance of real if sweaty life. If you are reducing mass approval to a foot-rule of gentility, you are aiders and abettors of the grave-diggers of Hollywood—the pre-production censors. You have a function which is also that of all movie critics and I hope we can at last get together on a concluding paragraph.

Your work, and mine, is not to adjudicate for people who go to the movies rarely but would like to have some cultural trifle to see every once in a while. It is by active recommendation and by active disuasion to speak for that huge audience which never gets around to putting its grouches into action. Of course, there are cases in which critics are no freer than the audience they

pretend to speak for. The irony of popular criticism today is that only the highbrow critics—whose papers carry no advertising—can say what they like. Newspaper advertising is a bayonet in the ribs of the film critics, just as pre-production censorship is a blunderbuss held up against the imagination of the film-makers. It is on the radio that one day there may be the ideal chance for popular criticism. It cannot be yet—obviously there are too many interested parties. But the radio audience is more nearly a microcosm of those two hundred million than the readers of any newspaper or magazine. It's the privilege of a radio critic to talk to an audience that is not already convinced, as the subscribers to a particular magazine tend to be. His audience is more truly a community than any he can write for. For it is made up of plumbers and priests, housewives and taxi-drivers, professors and cops, convicts and mannequins, of anybody who leaves his radio on while he eats or reads or nods or washes his hands. This audience cannot, because it is so mixed, get together on any technical aspect of the movies and I think that much illustration of the resources of direction or camera-work is for them—the gangsters and the mannequins—a waste of good talk. I believe this audience has only a nodding interest in all the chores with which we now fill our columns—the acting of so and so, the lighting, the color quality and so on. The mass of people—by which I mean the debutantes and the green-grocers—go to the movies because there they can see human habits and desires acted out in surroundings they live in or in surroundings they would like to live in. And the first duty of popular criticism is to bring sanity into the discussion of human living and loving. At the moment, nine critics out of ten accept Hollywood's ideas and then go to work on idiot niceties of dressing, acting, directing, and what-not. What this audience is waiting for and doesn't get is a little trenchant anger about the pap and moonshine that Hollywood too often gives us as a picture of normal life. Our job is to attempt the job which Bernard Shaw did so magnificently for the English-speaking theatre nearly fifty years ago—the

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# A Mid-West Critic Looks at the Films

By WARD MARSH

*From an address given at the National Board Conference. Mr. Marsh is Film Critic of the Cleveland Plain Dealer.*

**B**EFORE I begin to speak about pictures and criticism in general I should like to say a few words about my position in relation to the current cinema. I'm afraid you will find that I am one of the old die-hards, because I still believe we lost an art when the talkies came along. I believe, for instance, that although it is a good sign that we critics stand together on Walt Disney, that Disney veered away from pure cinema when he put in sound and dialogue. Today we have a new form in the cinema, but the silent screen in 1925, although dying on its feet from the star system, repetition of stories and that sort of thing, did have something that might have gone on to raise the cinema to great heights. But at that time it was necessary for something to step in and save the cinema, and it was the radio tube that did the job.

In a little while the same situation will arise again. The cinema will need to be saved once more, and once more it will be a technical device that will do the rescue work. We have the star system and repetition of stories again: Joan Crawford, for instance, appears always in the same type of story—a lovely person, a charming hostess, but always in the same story, time after time. What will happen next, of course, will be that the technical devices of depth and color will step in and save the present so-called cinema. We have color already, but depth is coming soon. In my opinion it is too bad that the cinema must be saved by technical devices—that it cannot continue and at least reach partial flower or full fruit through its own virility.

Color and depth are due to arrive and at one time I would have said that this meant the end of the cinema. I still think this is the case—that we will simply have our entertainment in a new form. The film itself should appeal to the emotions and it does not do that so much any more. The more we adopt technicalities, such as depth and

color, the more imagination goes by the board. When your imagination no longer works, your intellect must work instead, and the result is you are tired when you go to the movies or come from the movies. In the old days you could go in and sit down and come out feeling rested. Your mind did not need to work, and all the smart newspaper critics said: "Check your brains at the door with this picture." They were right and did not know it!

However, what the public and the critics think are often two very different things, and now that I have stated my position in regard to this one question I should like to go on and say something of the difficulties in which a critic is involved when he attempts to suggest to the public what is good and bad in the cinema. I shall begin by going back a long way, to a picture called *The Jack-Knife Man*—one that probably none of you remembers.

It was made by King Vidor, and Florence Vidor was in it as well as a man by the name of Fred Turner. It was a very sweet and appealing little story, but nobody went to see it any more than I could get people in the Mid-West to see *No Greater Glory*. (When *The Devil is a Sissy* was made, the public flocked to see Freddie Bartholomew and saw a very cheap version of *No Greater Glory*—that very lovely and moving picture, a very fine study in child psychology and one of the few fine studies we have had on the American screen comparable—in a good many respects—to the French film *Poil de Carrotte*) When *The Jack-Knife Man* arrived I came out in my column and blasted away at the public, but I could not persuade anyone to go and see it. Finally a group came to see me, (a representative group) and said: "We are very sorry we did not see this. But if you can use your influence to have it put in some other house we will very gladly go and see it."

So I arranged the showing with a theatre manager, and told him: "I will get behind this picture again, and we will get some publicity on the thing and get these people work-



ing on it, and the public will come out to see this picture."

He said: "I am very skeptical, but I will do it."

So he did it, and the picture died again, naturally. I went to the group that had asked for it and said: "What happened? You wanted me to do this, yet by a very careful check on the door a good many of you didn't come to see it."

The answer was: "Well, they played the picture on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, and we go to see pictures Saturday and Sunday."

So I lost a little faith along that line, and after having had eighteen years of it now, with a good many slaps in the face, I have felt that the job is a little bit hopeless, though I still continue to try with other pictures.

I tried with *Mayerling*, which is, I think, one of the finest pictures we could see, and I got a group to back it. After the first showing I went to the theatre manager and said: "Well, how did it go?" (He had offered the group a very fat share of the proceeds to go towards some fund they had organized.)

He said: "I don't think the group got behind it very well. We didn't sell very many tickets."

But strangely enough, after the opening day (of which the group had been in charge) the public flocked in! I don't know whether we can conclude from that that the public gets the idea there is something wrong with a picture if a good representative organization gets behind it! I only know that they do not go to it.

Perhaps, however, I can claim a little credit for pushing two other pictures. When *The Plough that Broke the Plains* came along I did all I could to help it, and perhaps as a result of this helped to persuade Warner Bros. to take on *The River* and show it in all their theaters in Ohio. But today my head is so very bloody and bowed that I should not like to claim too much.

We have in Ohio, I feel—probably far more than the upper class critics notice—the feeling that exists between the small town and the big city. I have friends who live in small towns and they laugh at my opinions about a good many pictures. *Zola* will die

in their town, but *Rosalie* will form a line clear down to the next block. It seems rather a shame to feel you must always pan the pictures they are going to like! Bye-and-bye they will say: "This man has no taste at all. We shan't bother with him."

The form of picture that we like in this country is the action picture. There is nothing original in this statement, but I think I may emphasize that we are a growing nation and we like action. All nations that are growing, like action pictures. Your appeal to the intellect comes from the countries which are adult countries and which are going down on the other side. Proof of the action picture lies, of course, in the Russian film, which has had pretty bad sledding for two or three years, and what we had hoped for at one time now seems to have faded out, although some traces showed again in their recent picture *Peter the First*.

This then is the position of the newspaper critic, particularly in the Mid-West where the paper gets into small-town circulation. We blanket Ohio very well with about half a million on Sunday and a little less than half of that during the week. We think the paper does have some influence and power; certainly it is honest in its opinions. I have heard some speakers refer to the position of the newspaper critic as being an impossible one because adverse criticism is a deterrent to advertising. Well, I have been on the Cleveland Plain Dealer since 1920, and never have I been told: "You must do this or do that because we are getting some extra advertising. Your criticism must be so-and-so because Loew's or Warner's or somebody else is kicking in with a two page ad, and we cannot offend them."

That has never happened to me! The day it does happen, I shall get out!

## Movies and Popular Criticism

(Continued from page 7)

dynamiting of false feeling and fatuous conventions.

It is not odd that Hollywood should put out the screwiest and most neurotic fantasy of our time. Hollywood is the non-political centre of the world. Hollywood is an ivory tower whose gnomes are financially secure and absorbed in spinning silk from their

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## EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS DEPARTMENT

*This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of Exceptional and Honorable*

*Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.*

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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## Keystone Rides Again

THE cycle of screw-ball comedies is getting faster and dizzier, with hardly a company that doesn't try its hand at producing something to spin along with it. Time was when it took special talents and personalities to provoke such antics—like the Marx brothers; goofiness wasn't pursued for its own sake but because some star had to be goofy or nothing. Now there appears to be no luminary too lofty to take a fall for a laugh. Maybe the mystic beginnings of it go back to the time when Carol Lombard added an e to her name and caught on, in that hilarious performance in *Twentieth Century* which she has been playing variations on ever since. More likely it is something much older and everlasting—the spirit of the custard pie. Mack Sennett, lengthened and given stream-line polish. In the future days when old films have to be excavated for, like mummies, it may well be that some prehistoric Keystone, like a kernel of grain preserved in the cerements of an Egyptian tomb, will be found to contain still the living seed of popular laughter. Sennett had at least one man's share of the eternal verities.

The comedy crop is the hardest there is from which to cull the exceptional. Only time can pick out those in which the laughter lasts. In any given audience there is too much variation of individual taste and digestion to supply a clear-cut verdict. One man's fun is another's vulgarity—mere slapstick to you may be a knockout to me. After a few seasons things become more clear, or seem to, and we find ourselves remembering

ancient merriments—*Million Dollar Legs*, for instance, or *Madame Racketeer*, or *Three Cornered Moon*. (It is astonishing, thinking it over, how many memorable comedies Paramount has turned out.) Aside from those carried by some star, Chaplin, Lloyd, the Marxes, and such. Are they classics of fun, or mere fond recollections?

The present wave of farce is full of craziness and violence, and lovely lady stars are blooming into acrobatic comedienues. Irene Dunne hasn't had her hair pulled yet, but who can tell? Kay Francis may yet fall into a brook, or Ann Harding make a comeback slipping on a banana peel. Nearly all the glamorous ones have taken their cock-eyed tumbles—Claudette Colbert, Myrna Loy, Rosalind Russell, Katherine Hepburn. Priscilla Lane hasn't even a chance to become glamorous before she gets a black eye. And la Lombard has practically made a profession out of being man-handled.

Try to get at any fundamental idea back of these things and it is pretty hard. Is it satire, or burlesque, or just plain screwiness? *Nothing Sacred* had a genuine satirical germ in it—its main idea, and such variations of it as the priceless Pageant of Heroines; though it rose, or descended, to such physical things as Fredric March and Miss Lombard lambasting each other with their fists. *True Confession* (You can't get away from Lombard!) had a character behind it—the girl who couldn't help lying, with the best of intentions. But most of them seem to be fun—if possible—for fun's sake.

Among the latest are *Bringing up Baby*, *A Slight Case of Murder*, and *Merrily We Live*. Here, when you try to analyze, there is the same confusion. *Bringing up Baby*





The ex-gangsters are confronted by a terrible temptation in "A Slight Case of Murder."

has some element of character behind it—the girl with irresponsible whims who can't stay out of trouble. *A Slight Case of Murder*, besides a sound farcical plot, more than touches upon satire and burlesque, with a Damon Runyan tang, and that strain of virility in it which the Warners, deliberately or accidentally, get even into their farces. (*Swing Your Lady* has it, and two new ones—*Love, Honor and Behave* and *He Couldn't Say No.*) *Merrily We Live* is just plain nutty.

*Bringing up Baby* is chiefly surprising for the easy gusto with which Katherine Hepburn swings into farce—swing high, swing low. A little pruning and pulling together, a little more skipping and less galumphing, and the thing would have been wholly delightful. It is as if the writers, enamored of their comic notions, gave so much rein to them that they got run away with, and on top of that the director, on the principle that a punch was better than a nudge, put on boxing-gloves when merely a deft touch

would have served far better. The plot concerns a maid's pursuit of a man, with complications involving a brontosaurus bone, a dog, two leopards—tame and wild—Charlie Ruggles not drunk and Barry Fitzgerald drunk, and gags, good and bad. Some people think it very funny. Others make serious reservations.

*A Slight Case of Murder* achieves the incredible feat of making corpses funny—showing once more what a fine line separates the comic from the tragic. That, of course, is only incidental to the plot. The main thing is that here the gangster theme has shifted its gear from melodrama to satire, and that with only the slightest shift of emphasis such tried old minions of the underworld as Edward G. Robinson, Allan Jenkins, Edward Brophy and Harold Huber have turned from sinister to comic. It is all about the troubles some racketeers had when prohibition ended, and they tried to become respectable—even high-toned. Lusty entertainment, if it entertains you at all.

*Merrily We Live* is an airy structure built on the stout old formula of one of those families whose household is a sort of unofficial insane asylum. The mother—whom Billie Burke makes one of the most delightfully daffy of her kind—goes in for philanthropy, specifically for taking in tramps with the object of giving them new starts in life. Husband, son, daughters, are all varying reactors to her cheerful but exasperating mania, and even the servants are infected. The advent of a casual passerby who is taken for a tramp provides the thread of plot. And here again you will laugh or not according to your nature or your state of mind.

In all of these farces, and in others too numerous to keep track of, the trend, no matter how tricked out with bright dialogue and polished acting, is back to the fundamentals of slap-stick. If a quip is funny, a trip is funnier. Custard pies may not be present in the flesh, but the ghosts of them hurl and splatter with all their old-time gusto. The only essential thing missing from them is the mad, final chase. When that comes, the Keystone tradition will be in full bloom again. More power to it.

J. S. H.

## The Case of Mr. Alfred Hitchcock

ALFRED HITCHCOCK is known as certainly the best movie director in England, and outside of Fritz Lang he may be the best director of movie melodrama in the world. He has learned a lot from Lang, and without Lang's flair for story, among other things, he is likely to go on learning from him without equalling him. But his pictures don't go very strong with American audiences, and though his technique is vaguely appreciated by a few people, even the critics who praise him for how he does things usually damn him for the things he does. Mark Van Doren is the only writer of authority who remembered and liked his *Woman Alone* last year well enough to call it one of the very best pictures of the year.

Not long ago his latest film came along,

called *The Girl Was Young*. As usual it had no great popular appeal—quite little, in fact. Those who did like it called it “poor Hitchcock”, or more cautiously “not the best Hitchcock”, soft pedalling the fact that any Hitchcock at all is as good as anything in its field. They always blame the story—it is “just melodrama,” it “has no content”—things like that. But things like that do not hurt other films that are just as much “just melodrama,” and have no content even under the strongest microscope. It must be something else that's the matter.

*The Girl Was Young* is simply a mystery story—something that usually creates quite a respectable amount of interest. It opens with a quarrel between a man and a woman, brief but long enough to put over the fact that if ever a woman deserved slaughter this woman did. Then her body is found on the beach, murdered, and the young man who found the body is accused of the murder, on fairly flimsy evidence but without any satisfactory alibi and with enough circumstantial detail to serve with the somewhat obtuse local authorities. The young man—obviously a nice and upright fellow—manages to break from the jail and—with the accidental help of the jailer's daughter, which of course grows into eager and sympathetic help—he goes searching for the real murderer, and eventually finds him. A mild enough mystery, perhaps, and towards the end there is some business about an auto falling into a mine that harks back to the perils Pauline used to get into with such consistent regularity. But the final finding of the murderer, playing traps in a popular dance band, brings one of those brilliant novelties in the use of sound that almost every Hitchcock film has provided ever since his first sound film—the first British sound film—*Blackmail*.

It is odd that, just as some writers are read for their style, no matter what plots they concern themselves with, Hitchcock hasn't gathered to himself a fair-sized cult for *his* style. It is undoubtedly true, as Professor Adler says, in listing the elements that matter to an average audience in seeing pictures, that plot comes ahead of everything else, and that the artistry, the style, comes at the very bottom of the list. But one



would expect some considerable vocal acclaim from somebody for a director whose style is inescapable, and inescapably good. Hitchcock knows as few men know how to put a movie together in the sense that Stevenson knew how to put a story together: his style is as individual and characteristic as possible, and just as Stevenson was a first-rate writer Hitchcock is a first-rate filmer, no matter what material he chooses to work with.

The trouble must be that he is too English. To many Englishmen he is too tritely English, like *Punch*, or certain character types that have been used unchanged in fiction so often that they have become tiresome; but that sort of over-familiarity should not operate in America—it must be that his Englishness is too unfamiliar, too foreign, without any of the fascination of some foreign things that are more strange.

Meanwhile, because they have not been made aware of it, many people who are naturally as much interested in the way a plot is handled as in the plot itself, are missing, in not being acquainted with the work of Alfred Hitchcock, one of the masters of film-making. Some enterprising exhibitor, with enough of a clientele among genuinely interested students of the motion picture, might do very well if he arranged a series of Hitchcock revivals, from *Blackmail* (and including *The Lodger*, unknown in this country) to *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, *The Secret Agent* and *The Woman Alone*. And not excluding *The Girl Was Young*. There is plenty in every one of them to delight those who delight in masterly craftsmanship.

J. S. H.

### Again the River!

All who enjoyed the Government documentary *The River*, reviewed in the Exceptional Photoplays Department of November 1937, should get hold of the book which has been made from it. While no book can hope to supply the continuity and smooth impressiveness of the picture itself, here at least are the best of the stills and the fine text of the commentary. Both are excellently presented and together form a handsome printed version of one of America's finest and most revealing documentaries.

Stackpole Sons, \$2.

## Selected Pictures Guide

(Continued from page 2)

Ingster. Directed by Roy Del Ruth. A likeable and lively bit of romance, built around the refreshing personality and remarkable skating of Sonja Henie. The story roams from Norway to America, with several entertaining spectacles, and the Raymond Scott Quintet provides one of its characteristic numbers. 20th Century Fox.

if HAWAII CALLS—Bobby Breen. Based on novel "Stowaways in Paradise" by Don Blanding. Directed by Edward Kline. The adventures of two boy stowaways. In Hawaii they become involved in an exciting series of incidents. The locale is on the steamer and in Hawaii. Some nice singing. RKO Radio.

f KID COMES BACK, THE—Barton MacLane, Wayne Morris, June Travis. Screen story by E. J. Flanagan. Directed by R. Reeves Eason. A brisk and entertaining prize-fight story, full of likeable characters, about a young Texan cowboy who is befriended by a heavy-weight whom he eventually has to fight for the championship. Barton MacLane gives a particularly good performance. Warner Bros.

f LOVE ON A BUDGET—The Jones Family. Screen story by Robert Ellis and Helen Logan. Directed by Herbert I. Leeds. Another interesting and human episode in the life of the Jones Family, centering about the housekeeping problems of the young newlyweds—serious to them but amusing to others. 20th Century Fox.

m \*OF HUMAN HEARTS—Walter Houston, Beulah Bondi, James Stewart. Novel "Benefits Forgot" by Honore Morrow. Directed by Clarence Brown. An unusually apt title for an unusual picture—a story of a father, mother and son in a little Ohio village just before the Civil War. It is a beautifully done slice of American life, not geared up to modern pace but truthful and moving. Metro Goldwyn Mayer.

fj PENROD AND HIS TWIN BROTHER—Billy and Bobby Mauch. Based on Penrod stories by Booth Tarkington. Directed by William McGann. A story of a boy and his love for his dog. The boy gets into difficulties when the exact counterparts of him and his dog move into the same town. The picture should appeal to both young and old. The acting of all the children is excellent. Warner Bros.

f RADIO CITY REVELS—Bob Burns, Jack Oakie, Ann Miller, Kenny Baker. Screen story by Matt Brooks. Directed by Ben Stollhoff. A gay hodge-podge of dancing, singing and comedy, built around the novel idea of Bob Burns being able to compose tunes only when asleep. Such excellent

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# National Motion Picture Week Plans

By MRS. RICHARD M. McCLURE, *President, Better Films Council of Chicago*

EDITOR'S NOTE: When the suggestion to observe National Motion Picture Week is presented some may say "every week is motion picture week." But the idea behind this special observance is not motion picture *attendance*, but particularly motion picture *attention*. The plan was first launched early in the winter, with a promise of fuller plans to follow, by Mrs. McClure, who has worked nationally with motion pictures as former Motion Picture Chairman of the General Federation of Women's Clubs. At the Conference of the National Board, in late January, Mrs. McClure was present and brought the idea before the Conference delegates. Many there asked for detailed information in the hope of having their communities take part. For them, and others who will also want to participate, suggestions from Mrs. McClure's program as prepared for the Chicago Council are offered.

Many of the cooperative activities suggested for this special observance are what Councils do the year-round and are familiar to those initiated into community activity, but the suggestion for this concentration and enlargement of interest is excellent. Mrs. McClure realizes from her long experience in club and community work the time and effort it takes to put such a plan into action, and also the need for a small beginning, and so she suggests that community groups may start with any part of the activities this year and next year be prepared to take part in the greater campaign for a truly National Week. Mrs. McClure will be pleased to learn of your efforts for this year and your suggestions for future years which will contribute to making this idea develop into a practical program, offering opportunity for the extension of the local activity and participation in the national activity.

THE Film As It Influences Life might well be chosen as the theme which underlies the observance of National Motion Picture Week from April 16 to April 23.

April seems a particularly significant month in film history. The first peep show was opened in New York City on April 14, 1894. The real birthday of the motion picture as a form of entertainment is April 23, 1896 in Koster and Bial's Music Hall in New York. On April 2, 1902 the first motion picture theatre was opened for business in Los Angeles. April 14, 1914 noted the opening of the Strand Theatre in New York, the forerunner of the present day theatres.

It is not intended that during National Motion Picture Week emphasis shall be placed upon motion picture attendance but rather to make those people who are regular patrons appreciate the privilege of attending the movies and at the same time develop a more discriminating mass audience. Such a week of programs, exhibits and demonstrations may serve to interest that larger and more critical audience which is not now patrons of the motion picture and make this group become better-films conscious. It is the hope that this smaller, more critical group will bring their viewpoints, born of the opportunity of travel and education, into the theatre and in that way create a new entertainment level for future production.

Like the Arabian Night Tales the motion picture has been referred to as the text book for the world. The widening interest in visual education gives testimony to the wisdom of Edison, who said in 1925 he believed that in ten years the motion picture might even take the place of the book in the class room. The motion picture becomes the spontaneous and vital force in education because it interests, it informs and it influences.

The motion picture has also been called the most fascinating story book of the age. It is important that the world should know the technique of preparing this book of the screen. It is well to remember that the vast audience who read these stories are clamoring for variety of theme. Since the adults outnumber the children it is apparent that the majority of themes are suited to adult audiences. One is giving a service to the community in pointing out that there are a



few juvenile editions of this screen story-book. Preparing and posting film guides is a practical demonstration of this form of service. It would seem equally valuable to especially comment upon such film literature as will enrich life and broaden one's appreciation of the fine arts.

The various character building agencies now find that the motion picture not only may present behavior problems but also behavior patterns. These organizations state that the films play a greater part in character building than that of home, church and school combined. They are making use of the films in developing their own program of work. The Church has recognized the value of the motion picture in religious education and various denominations make use of films in presenting the missionary work in foreign fields.

The following are but hints as to the varied and stimulating program which can be developed in MOTION PICTURE WEEK.

#### EDUCATION

Make a survey of the schools to ascertain the use of visual education. Urge school to present programs showing use of films in class rooms. Conduct an experiment to prove the value of this form of education. Give publicity to various surveys carried on by educators. If schools have neither films nor projector interest community in purchasing. Start a Film Library. Sponsor school Movie Clubs.

#### ART INSTITUTES AND MUSEUMS

Assist in securing an exhibit which may be displayed in the Institute or Museum. Arrange for the showing of films which present art problems or subjects. Discuss how the motion pictures may contribute to art appreciation.

#### LIBRARY COOPERATION

Contact librarians and ask for a permanent Motion Picture Corner. Supply the librarians with booklets and clippings and stills which will make this Corner an educational medium. Prepare a film guide for library use and a file for old lists. Post advance information about films made from books so librarians may prepare exhibits of correlating books. If the library has few reference books on motion pictures purchase some. Begin a library of stills for teacher

use. If the children's librarian has a story hour ask her to develop a strip-film project using some well known story. Learn if the library has a picturol, a projector or stereopticon. If not why not interest community groups in purchasing such equipment with slides and rolls which may be withdrawn for home use like library books? Ask librarians to prepare an exhibit of books which have been made into films. Subscribe for educational film magazines.

#### BOOK STORES AND MUSIC SHOPS

Most attractive displays may be arranged here through books, sheet music and records. Through a careful check with announced production schedules, the new films may be advertised. Speakers could give informal talks about the influence of motion pictures and the Fine Arts. Get Literary and Musical Clubs interested in this project.

#### DEPARTMENT STORES

It will be possible to plan for a series of displays throughout the stores showing how the films set the styles. It might prove feasible for stores to present a series of travel speakers and in conjunction with the illustrated lecture display handicraft of various nations. An exhibit of merchandise produced as a result of *Snow White* might serve to illustrate influence of Hollywood on merchandising.

#### CHURCHES

Urge the churches to make a study of the motion picture in the religious program of the church. Suggest an Easter Vesper Program showing some film or picturol of the Life of Christ or a series of programs showing sacred art, churches, etc. Ask theatre men to secure *King of Kings*, *Ben Hur*, *Sign of Cross* and short subjects of the Holy Land. Provide a list of suitable films for church use.

#### INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE

Because there are many excellent industrial films make a survey of industrial corporations, public utilities, railroad and steamship companies and furnish this list to schools and churches and clubs.

#### TRAVEL FILM LIBRARY

Why not canvas the town and secure names of travelers who have taken pictures and who would be willing to either loan them for school use or would be glad to

appear with the pictures in little assembly talks before schools and clubs. This might be a delightful project to develop for "shut-ins" programs at institutions. This week would be an excellent time to urge theatre managers to entertain groups of children and old people who can not often attend the theatre.

#### CAMERA AND ELECTRIC SHOPS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS

This week is the time when these three agencies may unite in paying tribute to Edison, Eastman and other film inventors. Prepare exhibits showing the development in camera and photography. Get Camera Clubs and Movie Clubs to instigate competitive projects open for amateur photographers. Arrange an exhibit of camera work. Sponsor a School of Photography during the week.

#### HEALTH CENTERS

There are many films which could be presented on child care and guidance. Doctors and nurses might be secured to talk, illustrating their subject with films. YMCA leaders, Scout directors might be prevailed upon to have a series of films presenting social problems or citizenship.

#### NEWSPAPER AND RADIO

These two mediums should be used to develop publicity and educational campaigns. Prominent leaders can be secured for radio talks and the papers should prove helpful in editorials and educational feature stories.

#### THEATRES

Ascertain what films your theatre will play this week. Have at least one morning program in a theatre where short talks and films can be shown to present the development of the motion picture. Urge manager to show the two reel film *The Film Parade* made by Stuart Blackton, an excellent history of the movies. Have managers talk about theatre problems. Take a trip through a large theatre and visit projection booth. Request film "revivals" of excellent films. Make special requests for newsreels, shorts and travelogues. Plan a morning program of special "shorts" for children. Learn how films are cut and edited and stored. Visit an exchange. Ask the manager if he can secure an old peep show machine as a lobby

display. Ask manager to run a trailer a week before telling of the plan to observe National Motion Picture Week.

#### PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Get the mayor to write a proclamation setting the week in motion.

#### BULLETIN BOARDS

Offer rewards for unique ways of posting films in public places. For example: A jolly chef cutout stands in front of his menu card headed Film Diet for the Week.

Each local film organization will develop a program which fits the needs and interest of the community. It is not expected that all national organizations will cooperate but it is hoped that enough interest may be expressed so that within a year it will be possible to report that National Motion Picture Week has been recognized by educators, churches, social workers, motion picture producers and the general public. The more publicity secured this year the easier it will be in the future to promote this educational feature.

The Better Films Council of Chicagoland will endeavor to set this program in motion by putting into operation the contacts indicated in the outline. Since many of the national organizations could not reach membership this year we shall endeavor to ask for this cooperation for 1939.

*For more information on how the plan is being carried out by the Better Films Council of Chicagoland write to Mrs. Richard M. McClure at 1747 West 170th Street, Chicago. Many helps for developing the suggestions in the above outline can also be secured from the National Board of Review.*

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### Movies and Popular Criticism

(Continued from page 9)

tails. Hollywood knows a great deal less about everyday life than a monastery or an ancient university. And we have to take what Hollywood gives.

We must give back as much as we take. I don't know if it's possible with the present set-up of censors and advertisers to write or talk movie criticism which is sane and at the same time is the representative voice of that mute and milling audience. But it is your opportunity, as a People's Institute, to

(Continued on page 18)



## Community Motion Picture Activities Reported at the Board Conference

**L**AST month this Magazine contained two of the reports made by delegates at the community activities panel discussion of the National Board Conference, and with this issue two more are given. The time was short, as many communities were reported, so that each speaker could tell only briefly in general of the work of her organization or stress a certain phase of it. Because of her school work we asked that the junior activity be emphasized by:

**Miss Beatrice R. Tripp**  
**President, Rochester (N. Y.) Better Films**  
**Council and Teacher of English and**  
**Motion Picture Appreciation,**  
**West High School**

**O**UR Council is made up of professional and business men and women. We also have a group, of which I am very proud, of quite a number of boys and girls of high school and college age. They are not an auxiliary but are regular members of the Council. We do not play down to them in any way in planning our programs. They come to the meetings and take the plans as we have made them for adults and they are among our most enthusiastic members. They go out and tell their friends what we are doing, and they talk up the good pictures. I wish we had more of them.

Probably you will be interested in what has happened in the Rochester schools. I will speak briefly about the attempt of the Monroe High School to show the better films. These films were not given to the students for entertainment. They were given to them as a teaching device in motion picture appreciation. They were not sent to the school for the purpose of raising money. The pupils were charged a minimum of 5 cents to see the pictures. Sometimes that covered the rental fee and sometimes it did not. The idea was that the next day those films would be discussed in the English classes, but that plan failed because of the attitude of the distributors. I agree with others that such splendid films as *David Copperfield* and *Little Women* should

be retained and I feel that schools should have the privilege of showing these as teaching devices, as laboratory work in the English classes. I do not know whether we can ever bring that about or not.

At the Madison High School, about six years ago, Mrs. Margaret Holly Carson, a French teacher by the way, gave voluntarily one of her vacant periods each week to conduct a group in motion picture appreciation. If you have ever taught school you will realize what it means for a teacher to give up a free period. She also gave up her Friday afternoons to take her group to the downtown theatre. The class decided what picture they wanted to see. Mrs. Carson telephoned to the theatre manager that they were coming and they went and he let them in free of charge. So much work has been put on her in other fields that she has had to give that up.

I tried the same thing at West High School. We had such heavy registration that, instead of the one period I had volunteered for, I found myself obliged to give up two periods. Another English teacher gave up two periods and a teacher of physical geography, interested in films, gave up one period. So we had five classes running for a time. We thought that was a little too much of a good thing, perhaps, and the other teachers finally dropped out of it. As I went on with it, though, I realized how much there is to be done in such a class and I began to advocate a credit course. I thought if I could get the pupils more than once a week, I could give them enough work in background and history to justify the schools in giving credit for graduation. Much to my surprise, the superintendent approved what he called an experimental course. I have two classes, one twice a week, giving four credits, another one three times a week giving six credits. Some of the pupils liked the course so well they took it over and over even after they had ceased, of course, to get credit for it.

Some of our students have spoken at the Council meetings and some of them have

written their senior essays on what they have learned in the courses. One boy wrote about double feature bills and he is scheduled to read his essay at the commencement exercises next week.

About a year ago a committee was formed for revision of the English course of study in Rochester. That committee has written into the regular English course a unit on motion picture appreciation, which means that in the second semester of the third year motion picture appreciation is stressed more than anything else in all the Rochester high schools.

\* \* \*

And now we hear from one of the Councils which has been represented at our Conference for many years.

**Mrs. V. J. Guthery**  
**President, Charlotte (N. C.) Motion**  
**Picture Council**

**C**HARLOTTE is one of the smaller towns. We have about 85,000 people and have seven theatres, two of which are second-runs. Our Council has been in existence for sixteen years and is, I believe, the only organization of its kind in the state. We were formerly known as the Better Films Committee, but changed a few years ago to the Charlotte Motion Picture Council. Some of the women who launched this work sixteen years ago are still active in it.

Our major aim has been to present good, clean, safe programs for the children's matinees. With very few interruptions we have had these on Saturday mornings and the managers of the theatres have always worked with us in the greatest harmony. We consider that the cheap Western is a menace to children but we do not know how to get rid of them. There are lines of children every Saturday a block long to see the cheap Westerns, in opposition to our pictures.

We have helped, too, with the visual education in our schools. Two of the high schools have projection machines. When an exceptional picture is coming which needs publicity the telephone committees get busy in helping put it across. Publicity is always carried on the bulletin boards in the schools.

We are trying an experiment in alternating our meetings, with one month a morn-

ing business meeting and the next a dinner meeting to which many men in our organization can come more conveniently. Then we have the theatre managers and we hear from them. We have a regular program at this dinner meeting and make more of a feature of it. We have two ministers who are very active in our Council. At one time in the history of our organization we had so many it seemed as if it were getting to be a regular ministerial association. Now we have these two very active ministers, and certainly they are broadminded and we find them very valuable.

We have a Review Committee and also a Junior Review Committee, which regularly reviews the picture and uses the material in connection with high school work in motion picture appreciation classes. They seem to dovetail together in beautiful fashion. These juniors have been a great impetus and inspiration to us.

(Continued from page 16)

make the effort to think and act as free agents. Where a critic has only the weapon of persuasion and implication, you have the great weapon of a boycott. It is your chance to span the gap between what is and what might be a standard of real popular criticism.

(Continued from page 13)

performers as Victor Moore, Milton Berle, Helen Broderick and Jane Froman round out a thoroughly all-star cast. RKO Radio.

**f ROMANCE IN THE DARK** — Gladys Swarthout, John Boles, John Barrymore. Screen story by Hermann Bahr. Directed by H. C. Potter. A gay romantic comedy of a young girl who wants to become an operatic singer. The locale is Budapest, and both Miss Swarthout and John Boles are given ample opportunity to sing. Subtle comedy is supplied effectively by John Barrymore. Paramount.

**m \*SLIGHT CASE OF MURDER**, A—Edward G. Robinson, Jane Bryan, Allen Jenkins. Play by Damon Runyon and Howard Lindsay. Directed by Lloyd Bacon. A very funny farce that swings up into high comedy, about a beer baron and his gang trying to be respectable after prohibition. Written, directed and acted with rare deftness, with some of the best ex-gangsters in the cast. First National.

**fj START CHEERING**—Jimmy Durante, Joan Perry. Screen story by Corey Ford. Di-



rected by Albert S. Rogell. An amusing comedy with a co-ed college for the background of music and fun. A film idol gives his manager plenty of trouble by quitting the films to enter college. Columbia.

f WIFE OF GENERAL LING, THE—Griffith Jones, Inkijino, Adrienne Renn. Screen story by Wadislav Vajda. Directed by Peter Cheney. A melodrama, laid in Hong Kong, of an English spy trying to keep British arms from being smuggled through to a Chinese bandit. A lot of mysterious, creepy action and a fine performance of the bandit who masqueraded as a philanthropist. British Production. Gaumont British.

f YANK AT OXFORD, A—Robert Taylor, Maureen O'Sullivan, Lionel Barrymore. Screen story by Sidney Gilliat and Michael Hogan. Directed by Jack Conway. A refreshing and entertaining story of a bumpkin American youth with supreme athletic prowess finishing his education in England amid the staid shades of Oxford. The plot is not unlike other college stories, but its setting and the contrast between English and American ways give it novelty. The dialogue is particularly bright and amusing. Metro Goldwyn Mayer.

#### CARTOONS AND COMEDIES

- f CANDID KID—Skit on candid camera rivals. Vitaphone.
- f DOGGONE MIXUP, A—Harry Langdon—In the style of some of the early Langdon comedies, about a timid man who couldn't resist bargains. A fine big dog provides real natural laughs. Columbia.
- fj DONALD'S BETTER SELF (Walt Disney Cartoon)—Walt Disney shows how Donald Duck's angelic and diabolic sides battle with each other over which shall determine about his getting to school. Novel and clever. RKO Radio.
- f GANDY THE GOOSE—An amusing cartoon about the adventures of a young goose. Educational.
- f JUNGLE KITTERS (Merrie Melodies)—Cartoon. Vitaphone.
- f JUST ASK JUPITER—A mouse dreams he is a cat. Funny. Educational.
- j LEARN POLIKENESS (Popeye Cartoon)—Popeye is being taught politeness but gets into a row with his teacher over Olive Oil. Paramount.
- fj LET'S CELEBRATE (Popeye Cartoon)—Popeye takes Olive Oil's grandmother out for a good time and feeds her spinach to win the dance contest. Paramount.
- f OUR GANG FOLLIES OF 1938—Our Gang puts on a musical show, which a gorgeous dream of Alfalfa interrupts. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f PIPE DREAMS—A clever cartoon, in which the monkeys—who hear, see and speak no evil come to life and have some adventures with a smoking pipe. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj RIDING THE RAILS (Betty Boop Cartoon)—Pudgy has a bad time in the subway. Paramount.
- f WAITING AROUND—Comedy. How waiters become stars. Vitaphone.
- fj SNEEZING WEASEL, THE (Merrie Melodies)—Cartoon. Vitaphone.
- fj YOKEL BOY MAKES GOOD (Oswald Cartoon)—A poor little skunk is deserted by everybody until he becomes a hero. Universal.
- f YOU TOOK THE WORDS RIGHT OUT OF MY HEART—Bouncing ball cartoon with Jerry Blaine and his orchestra. Paramount.
- fj WHAT PRICE PORKY? (Looney Tunes)—Cartoon. Vitaphone.

#### INFORMATIONALS

- f CALIFORNIA GIANTS—Showing the fate of the beautiful giant redwoods. Paramount.
- fj FRIEND INDEED (A Pete Smith Specialty)—How a blind man's dog, the "Seeing Eye," won his right to ride on passenger trains with his master. Interesting and touching. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f GOLD—Showing how most of the gold in the world is mined in South Africa by the African natives. Paramount.
- f GOOD LOOKING WINNERS (Grantland Rice Sportlight

with Ted Husing)—Victory winners in all fields of sport. Paramount.

- i LIFE IN LAPLAND—Showing the life of the Laplander. A nomad race of people who know their needs or reindeer. Sanders Artists Bureau.
- i MARCH OF TIME NO. 7, 1938—(Series 4)—This issue covers the bureau of missing persons; the white Russians; making paper out of Southern pines. RKO Radio.
- i MODERN DIXIE—Mostly about Louisiana, and the contrast between its old picturesqueness and its growth as an important modern industrial center. 20th Century Fox.
- i PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 7—Seeing the moon through a powerful telescope; autumn in the Alps; the shadow man. The first two subjects are instructive as well as entertaining, the last subject is mildly amusing. Paramount.
- fj QUINICPLAND—A very amusing picture of the quims in their daily routine. RKO Radio.
- fj \*SONG BIRDS OF THE NORTH WOODS—An interesting and charming picture of bird-life, with excellent recording of the bird songs. Educational.
- fj STRANGER THAN FICTION NO. 47—Mechanical cotton picker. Biggest sawmill in the world but it was never used. A happy family of a dog, a cat and two baby squirrels. Embalming trees to make them water tight. A man who still uses the old methods of candle making. Showing the boys from the "Joseph Conrad" swimming in lava from a nearby volcanic mountain. A dog and two tigers who live together in a zoo. Universal.
- f UNUSUAL OCCUPATIONS NO. 4—An expert in genuine masterpieces. Dried sea horses used as decorations. A stage coach which still runs without passengers. Making a living by painting pictures on the pavement. The art of putting ships in bottles. A maker of castanets. Bob Burns and his microscope. Done in color. Paramount.
- f VITAPHONE PICTORIAL REVIEW NO. 6—Arabian Horses with Hollywood stars; ice hockey; making shoes. Done in color. Vitaphone.
- fj WHITE MAGIC—About skiing in the Tyrol and Idaho, with some splendid stuff from Idaho. RKO Radio.
- fj YES—BANANAS—An interesting record of how bananas are planted, grown, gathered and shipped. Pan-American Union Productions.

#### MUSICALS, NOVELTIES AND SERIALS

- f BREATHLESS MOMENTS—Risky scenes caught by the newsreel cameraman. Contains some exceptional shots. Universal.
- f CARL HOFF AND HIS ORCHESTRA—Music of all sorts. Vitaphone.
- f COMMUNITY SING NO. 4—The barbershop quartet singing some old songs. Columbia.
- f HINBER HARMONIES—Hinber and his orchestra. Paramount.
- f HIT AND RUN (Your True Adventure Series)—Innocent youth barely escapes trial for hit and run murder. Vitaphone.
- fj JUNGLE JUVENILES NO. 2 (Pete Smith Specialty)—Further adventures of a very small boy in the jungle, with an elephant and two chimps. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f LATIN RHYTHM—Lively music and the singing of Jan Pearce make this song-and-dance act pleasant. RKO Radio.
- f LISTEN TO LUCAS—Clyde Lucas and his orchestra. Paramount.
- fj LONE RANGER, THE (Serial) NOS. 2-5—Starring Lee Powell and Herman Brix. Screen story by Benny Shipman. Directed by William Markey and John English. A serial of the pioneer days. All but one of a band of rangers are wiped out by the outlaws and the lone ranger swears vengeance. Plenty of excitement with Silver, the beautiful white horse, as a symbol of law and order. Republic.
- fj MYSTERIOUS PILOT, THE (Serial) NOS. 1-6—Starring Frank Hawks and Dorothy Sebastian. Story "The Silver Hawk" by William Byron Mowery. Directed by Spencer Gordon Bennet. A serial of the better type, with the famous flier as star. The scene is in the Canadian Northwest, with an aerial photographer and a Mountie becoming involved in the mystery surrounding a girl's flight from some unknown peril. At the end of each episode Frank Hawks gives a lesson in flying to a young boy that is interesting, instructive and easy to follow. Columbia.
- fj NEW AUDIOSCOPIKS, THE—An amusing stunt picture, using three-dimensional photography in startling and entertaining fashion. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f SOMEWHERE IN PARIS—A Mentone picture. Excellent dancing and singing. Universal.
- f WHAT DO YOU THINK NO. 2—An oddly mysterious little tale of how a young husband was cured of jealousy. What if by a dream, or by a visitation from another world? Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures is a citizen body, organized in 1909 by the People's Institute of New York City as a medium for reflecting intelligent public opinion regarding a growing art and entertainment. This is still the Board's function, together with that of disseminating information on the subject of motion pictures and carrying on a constructive program having to do with community cooperation in the advancement and uses of the motion picture.

The National Board is opposed to legal censorship and is in favor of the community better films plan of placing emphasis upon and building support for the finer and more worthwhile films. It is at all times glad to cooperate with any agency to encourage and guide the motion picture in developing its possibilities both as recreation and as entertainment.

It carries on its work through various committees. All members of the committees serve without pay. No member is connected with the motion picture industry. They are representative of varied interests and activities and many are connected with large public welfare organizations or educational institutions.

The General Committee is a body evolved out of the original group organized in 1909. It is the appeal and central advisory committee of the National Board to which policies are referred and to which decisions of the Review Committee regarding pictures may be carried either by the producers or by the Review Committee itself.

The Executive Committee is composed of members of the General Committee and is the directing body of the National Board, charged with the formulation of policies, the election of members, the expenditure of funds and supervision of all administrative affairs.

The Review Committee is a large group of 300 members carrying on the work of reviewing the films. It is divided into sub-groups which meet for review per schedule during each week in the projection rooms of the various motion picture companies.

The Membership Committee supervises the membership list of the Review Committee and recommends the names of proposed new members for consideration by the Executive Committee.

The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays is composed of critics and students of the cinema interested particularly in encouraging the artistic development of the motion picture. It reviews and publishes a critique of the finest films and assists community groups in the showing of unusual films to special audiences. Its pioneer activity has done much to lay the foundation for the Little Photoplay Theatre movement and to stimulate the organization of subscription groups to develop audiences for the support of the creative achievements of the screen.

## NATIONAL MOTION PICTURE COUNCIL

The community or field work of the National Board of Review is conducted under its National Motion Picture Council, through affiliated membership groups, service contact groups and correspondents throughout the country. The National Council assists in the organization and program of work of local groups which are usually called Councils.

These Councils follow a plan initiated by the National Board in 1916 of having a membership composed of representatives from many organizations, cultural, educational, recreational, religious, and civic, so that they typify the original movement for community participation in the development and best use of the motion picture as recreation and education.

The objectives of such organizations are as follows:

To demonstrate through the education of public opinion, the effectiveness of selection and classification, instead of censorship, as a means of forwarding the development of the motion picture and its best uses.

To encourage through open meetings, forums, classes and other means, the study of the motion picture as a medium of entertainment, education and artistic expression.

To concentrate the attention of the public on specific worthwhile films through the publication of a Photoplay Guide to the selected pictures being currently shown at local theatres.

To arrange family Friday night or week-end programs of selected films, and junior matinees of pictures particularly suited to the tastes of children, through cooperation with local exhibitors.

To endorse and further the use of visual education through motion pictures in the schools.

To arrange and promote occasional exhibitions of exceptional and cultural films that would not normally be shown in the commercial theatres.

### PUBLICATIONS

The National Board of Review and its Council as an aid to the groups carrying out these objectives furnishes an informational service through its publications.

#### National Board of Review Magazine (monthly)

\$2.00 a year for individual subscriptions

\$1.00 a year to Council or club groups

#### Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures

\$2.50 a year when taken alone; available at a special rate of \$1.00 in conjunction with the Magazine.

#### Selected Pictures Catalog (annual) .....25c

#### Special Film Lists .....10c ea.

Such as Selected Films for Children's Showings, Selected Book-Films, Educational Films, etc.

#### National Board of Review—Its Background, Growth and Present Status.....free

#### National Board of Review—How It Works.....free

#### A Plan and a Program for Community Motion Picture Councils .....10c



# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

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April, 1938  
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Bette Davis in "Jezebel" (see page 13)

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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

f ACCIDENTS WILL HAPPEN — Ronald Reagan. Screen story by George Becker. Directed by William Clemons. How a young man working for an insurance company managed to expose an accident racket. Warner Bros.

fj \*ADVENTURES OF CHICO, THE—See Exceptional Photoplays Dept., page 18.

f \*ADVENTURES OF MARCO POLO, THE—Gary Cooper, Sigrid Gurie, Basil Rathbone, Alan Hale, Binnie Barnes. Screen story by N. A. Pogson. Directed by Archie Mayo. An adventure picture with true story-book glamor of the Venetian salesman learning about strange things like spaghetti, gunpowder and coal in the distant kingdom of Kubla Khan, and carrying himself through with a very American spirit and sense of humor. There is also more than a touch of romance to it. United Artists.

m BLUEBEARD'S EIGHTH WIFE—See Exceptional Photoplays Dept. page 19.

f BULLDOG DRUMMOND'S PERIL—John Howard, John Barrymore, Louise Campbell. Story "The Third Round" by H. C. McNeile. Directed by James Hogan. Once more Bulldog Drummond's marriage has to be postponed while he trails a diamond thief and experiences many thrills and dangers. Entertaining for those who like detective stories. Paramount.

m CONDEMNED WOMEN—Sally Eilers, Louis Hayward, Anne Shirely. Screen story by Lionel Houser. Directed by Lew Landey. A girl, imprisoned for petty thieving, is befriended by, and falls in love with the prison doctor. Follows disillusionment, jail-break and recapture, with ultimate re-

conciliation of lovers. Rather shallow in everything but drama, which is speedy and entertaining. RKO Radio.

m CRIME OF DR. HALLET—Ralph Bellamy, Josephine Hutchinson. Based on original story by Carl Dreher. Directed by S. Sylvan Simon. A story of a research doctor in Sumatran jungle who commits a crime to carry on the work and give his assistant, who died for the cause, the credit of discovering a serum to halt a tropical pestilence. Universal.

m DIVORCE OF LADY X, THE — Merle Oberon, Laurence Olivier, Ralph Richardson, Binnie Barnes. Story "Counsel's Opinion" by Gilbert Wakefield. Directed by Tim Whelan. A light and frisky comedy, laid in England, in which a divorce lawyer mistakes a sprightly but merely adventurous girl for a hardened divorcee. Some excellent comedy acting, and good technicolor. British production made by London Films. United Artists.

m FIRST HUNDRED YEARS, THE—Robert Montgomery, Virginia Bruce, Warren William. Screen story by Norman Krasna. Directed by Richard Thorpe. A bright and engaging comedy about a marriage that nearly broke up because both husband and wife were talented enough to want independent careers. Good characters excellently played and directed, with sprightly dialogue. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

m FOOLS FOR SCANDAL—Carole Lombard, Fernand Gravet. Based on play "Return Engagement" by Nancy Hamilton, James Shute, Rosemary Casey. Directed by Mervin LeRoy. A frothy comedy about an American movie star, in Europe, who hires a French Marquis as a cook without knowing what he is. Of course they fall in love. First National.

f GAIETY GIRLS, THE — Jack Hulbert, Patricia Ellis. Screen story by Arthur Macrae. Directed by Thornton Freeland. A slyly amusing English musical comedy, with an American heroine and director, in which a chorus girl gets a millionaire by mistake. Refreshingly different in style. United Artists.

f GIRL OF THE GOLDEN WEST, THE—Jeanette MacDonald, Nelson Eddy. Based on play by David Belasco. Directed by Robert Z. Leonard. A western romance of the Pioneer days. The story of a girl who is willing to sacrifice her happiness for the man she loves even though he is a bandit. The music is nice. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f GOODBYE BROADWAY — Alice Brady, Charles Winninger. Based on play "Shannons of Broadway" by James A. Gleason. Directed by Ray McCarey. The story of two  
(Continued on page 12)



# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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## The Neely Bill

AT first glance the principal aim of this bill (Senate Bill 153) would seem to be "to prohibit and to prevent the trade practices known as 'compulsory block-booking' and 'blind-selling' . . ." (We quote from the bill). Apparently it sets out to defend the exhibitor from the distributor by requiring the latter to "furnish the exhibitor . . . a complete and true synopsis" of the contents of any film he may wish to lease to him. Should the exhibitor then accept lease of the film and find subsequently that its contents were substantially other than stated in the synopsis, he may not only cancel his lease but claim damages in the Federal Court. Should the Court then rule that the synopsis is inadequate the distributor is liable to punishment in the form of a fine, or imprisonment, or both.

It is when we come to examine the requirements of such a synopsis that we get a better clue to the underlying significance of the bill. Besides an outline of the story the synopsis must contain "a statement describing the manner of treatment of dialogs concerning and scenes depicting vice, crime, or suggestion of sexual passion." In other words the aim of the bill is not to protect the exhibitor against films of poor quality but to introduce additional censorship measures. It will be left, in the last analysis, to the Federal Courts to decide whether a film is suitable for public exhibition. The National Board is against any such measure which attempts further to control the entertainment of the public.

In addition to this the bill would lay the distributor open to decisions which rest purely upon personal opinion and interpretation. It is most unreasonable to suppose that a synopsis can describe the precise degree of "suggestion of sexual passion," or the exact "treatment" of a scene in such a way as will be interpreted alike by the distributor, the exhibitor, and a court of law. Already the script of every feature picture is subject to examination and blue-pencilling and the finished product must be ruled upon by various censor bodies. It is too much to demand of the industry that it also submit to pre-production censorship by the exhibitors, with the threat of Federal intervention and control behind them.

These factors have been considered by the members of the Executive Committee of the National Board and fully discussed in a statement issued by them to Senators, the press and community motion-picture groups. This statement also draws attention to the fact that the Neely Bill is by no means the first attempt to introduce, through so-called social legislation, a wedge for the control of the motion-picture by Federal authority. It is the belief of the National Board that issues pertaining to the motion-picture should be resolved within the industry itself. Passage of any bill in its belief giving Federal Control of one kind or another would be a dangerous precedent when it comes to a medium of human expression. The Board still believes in free speech and in a free screen.

## Monthly Group Discussion

THREE of the articles published in this number touch upon a matter which caused much discussion at the National Board's Annual Conference and demands the attention of all groups interested in the study of the motion picture. This is the question of entertainment in the cinema; whether entertainment of a purely non-controversial nature is the movie's only function, or whether the industry should concentrate more upon presenting entertainment pictures which raise social issues or suggest social responsibilities? The three articles show us different aspects of this problem: Dr. Adler says very definitely that the function of the movie is in no way educational; that the homes, schools and churches need revision far more than the movies need it. Mr. Edgar Anstey shows that there are "many people, a vast audience in fact, who (are) only too anxious to learn from the screen something more of the social structure of the world in which they live." Mr. Paul Rotha believes that "the next most important experiments from a creative point of view in the motion picture field are going to arise from the use of film in education."

The above opinions are not entirely conflicting, since Dr. Adler refers to entertainment features while Mr. Anstey and Mr. Rotha are concerned mainly with the documentary film. But from these articles we may draw a topic for our current Monthly Discussion; one which should be of interest to all groups:

DO YOU THINK IT DESIRABLE FOR THE ENTERTAINMENT PICTURE TO EMBRACE SOCIAL ISSUES AND CONCENTRATE MORE UPON INSTRUCTING ITS AUDIENCE? OR DO YOU THINK THIS SHOULD BE THE TASK OF THE DOCUMENTARY FILM ALONE?

If your group is interested in this topic please place it before members for discussion at your next available meeting. Write a short (about 500 words) report of their findings and post it to the Monthly Group Discussion Editor. All reports will be gratefully received, carefully read and incorpo-

rated into an article which will be published in a subsequent issue of the Magazine. Whenever possible the Editor will quote direct from reports and will always list the names of groups participating in the discussion.

The present topic will be open to discussion until May 25th.

If your group has special interest in a certain subject and would like to see it raised as a discussion topic, please inform us and we will be glad to publish the letter in our columns and invite the support of other groups.

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## Replies to the February Topic

ONE of the most warmly received and publicized speeches at the Board's Conference was Mr. Robert Edmond Jones' talk on "The Future of Color in the Movies." Mr. Jones is one of America's most distinguished scenic artists and his talk was an enthusiastic support of color. He spoke of how great a part color must always play in our lives and how it means something to us in a way never shared by black and white, finally making the suggestion that color stood in the same relation to black and white as singing to speaking, or a symphony to a solo. "What I mean by these comparisons" he concluded "is that color is not only more complicated and more elaborate than black and white, but that it is something quite different in kind. It has new laws, new conventions, quite different from black-and-white laws and conventions, and it needs an entirely new type of thinking." In other words Mr. Jones would have us develop a special attitude towards color and see it as a special medium rather than simply in comparison with black and white.

These suggestions of his and the comments they aroused in the press gave the Editors the idea of sounding their readers on the question. Accordingly in our Feb-

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# The Movies, the People, and the Critics

By MORTIMER J. ADLER

*Dr. Adler is the author of "Art and Prudence," and Associate Professor of the Philosophy of Law at the University of Chicago. His article is based upon an address given at the National Board's Annual Conference.*

THERE is one point I would like to dispose of before I begin to discuss the topic I have chosen for this afternoon. I fear that I was invited to this conference as a philosopher. But I would much prefer to speak as a lover—a lover of the movies. I hope you will agree that it is possible to be this without ceasing to be a lover of wisdom. I would go further and ask you to see that to love the movies is the beginning of wisdom about them. Almost all that is unsound and extreme in movie criticism comes from persons who, as the story goes, just don't like movies.

While I was oppressed by the role of philosopher, certain high-brow themes occurred to me as proper for this occasion. I thought, for instance, of talking about Movies and Education, but I decided against that subject for various reasons. In the first place, it seems to me preposterous to be concerned about the educational responsibilities of the screen when the schools and colleges of the country are failing so miserably to give the young the liberal education they deserve and need. That would be like worrying about the housing problem in Yonkers while New York burned to the ground. In the second place, I hold as a fundamental and demonstrable thesis that art does not teach, morally or intellectually, except in the same way that experience teaches. It does not teach as books and teachers teach. And, so far as incidental misinformation is concerned, the movies can be charged with far less than the schools. There is both more, and more serious, misinformation about the nature of the world and man in most of the textbooks used in high schools and colleges, especially in social sciences courses, than could be contained in a hundred movies. The anti-philosophical bias of much of contemporary education is incomparably more damaging than the repor-

torial errors of the movies which, after all, are fiction, not history or science, and hence have no obligation to report the facts as they are.

The same argument applies in regard to the problem of incidental moral influences which may or may not be exerted by the movies. Here let us first examine the more directly responsible institutions—the home and the church, for example. If we are unable to resist considering the movies as an educational medium, let us do so from another point of view. Let us realize that their principal educational importance is to enrich and stimulate the imagination of the young. It is such figures as Mickey Mouse who can best make the movie theater a school for the imagination.

I also considered talking about Movies and Propaganda, but here again I was obliged to reject the idea for reasons similar to those I have already mentioned. The illiberal education given by the schools is full of all sorts of illicit propaganda. Those who worry over public indoctrination by the movies would do better to consider the many kinds of indoctrination taking place in a school system such as ours, which fails to discipline the intellect, which leaves the minds of its students so uncritical that they swallow whole any last dogma of social or natural science. A college education is nothing but propaganda if it is not truly liberal—based on the cultivation of the intellect by the liberal arts—but a work of fine art becomes propaganda, in the vicious sense, only by ceasing to be a work of art.

I have, moreover, two positive reasons why neither of the themes I have mentioned seemed worth discussing here. First, I believe that the cinema should be considered primarily as a work of art, and, hence, a source of entertainment. We should concentrate our critical attention chiefly upon these two aspects of a thing. As Mr. Van Doren has so plainly said, to be art and to be entertainment are far from inconsistent. On the contrary, they are essentially correlative. And, second, if a movie succeeds in

being good as a movie, in pleasing and entertaining as movies should, all other problems—moral, political and educational—can be left to take care of themselves.

For these reasons, I have chosen to talk about the intrinsic goodness of movies as movies: first, by considering the excellence peculiar to movies; then, by considering the popular appreciation of movies; and, finally, by considering the critics who judge the movies and try to formulate or influence public taste.

*The Movies: The Principles of Cinematic Excellence*

For the sake of brevity, I shall mention only the few outstanding points. I shall begin by asking you to note two basic distinctions to be observed in considering the intrinsic goodness of the movies. The first of these is the distinction between *content* and *style*, common to all the arts of fiction. By content I mean the subject-matter of fiction—the theme of the plot. By style I mean the manner in which the subject-matter is presented: how the plot is developed, how the theme is handled. We must realize that style is the important factor in judging a movie; not that content is unimportant, but that the judgment of content is not peculiarly relevant to the movie, for its particular excellences are determined by the distinctive cinematic style. Broadly speaking, this means that the content or theme of a movie does not need to be original for the movie to be good. Even less important in judging a movie is its accidental *message*, social, political, or economic. When the plot appears to be thin and unconvincing, it is usually because the style is inadequate.

The second basic distinction is between *narrative* and *filmic* style. (This we may compare to the difference between narrative and linguistic style in literature. The literary story-teller is both a maker *of* plots and a maker *in* language). Narrative style is essentially different for different media of narration.

It is one thing in the novel, another in the play, another in the cinema. And while all fiction demands originality in plot development, as the principal factor—but not originality of theme—the narrative problems of the cinema are peculiar to the exigencies of the filmic medium. Thus, the plot

structure must be properly shaped for the screen; and here, primarily, the plot must be given the right magnitude. The rules of magnitude have to do with the degree of complexity which can be unified. Cinematic fiction has neither the extensivity of the novel nor the intensity of the play. It has a magnitude of its own.

What I have called filmic style is the technique of ordering the elements of the medium. Let us turn to the literary analogue. When we express ourselves in words, we must regard both vocabulary and syntax. The first rule of literary style is to achieve, by the choice of words and their ordering, an effect at once clear and elevated. We must express ourselves intelligibly without meanness or vulgarity. And, secondarily, we must make our linguistic style appropriate to the story we are telling.

In the case of movies, the pictorial aspect of filmic style is primary because the pictures carry the continuity rather than the words. Plot, said Aristotle, is the soul of poetry; filmic continuity is the soul of a movie! Excellence in filmic style is, therefore, achieved by a right use of the camera, by effective composition and cutting of the pictorial sequences. But, in the case of so complex a medium as the cinema, which combines pictures with words and non-verbal sounds, we must pass from the consideration of pictorial montage to the more difficult problem of the total montage of all the cinematic elements. Good style in a movie, as in a play or novel, requires clarity and distinction. Most good American films have the former but lack the latter; the converse is true of the better foreign films. Finally, the choice of plot material must be determined by the limitations of filmic medium. The content must be adaptable; not only adaptable, but adapted. Neither the content of the diffuse novel nor that of the concentrated drama is readily adapted to cinematic conditions. The short story is most easily adapted and particularly the melodrama and the preposterous farce. The ideal, of course, is the cinematic original, unless directors learn to adapt the materials they use, more freely than at present. Most directors at present are too intent upon giving a report of a novel or play.

These, then, are the things that make a



movie good. Now let us ask what things do *not* make a movie good as a movie. One of these non-essentials we have already mentioned—originality of theme. Others are: The greatness of the literary work—the novel or play—from which the cinema is adapted; the social or political importance of the theme; the message—its news-value, its timeliness, its comment on burning issues; the historical importance of the characters (Zola, Napoleon, etc.); literary excellences, such as clever dialogue; isolated histrionic excellencies, such as *outstanding* pieces of acting.

### *The People and What They Like*

Let us now consider all this in relation to the public. What do people appreciate in a movie and in what order shall we list the things they like? I offer you the following as an approximate description of the factors of popular taste in the order in which they are emphasized by the public: (1) The content of the story rather than the style; (2) how it is told narratively rather than filmically, i.e., narrative style rather than filmic style, and, so far as the former is concerned, only that which is common to all the arts of fiction; (3) the incidentals: the acting, the dialogue, the music, etc., and these appreciated as incidentals rather than as integral subordinates; (4) the propaganda, the lesson, the message, the comment on current affairs; (5) last and least, the cinematic artistry, both in the matter of duration and in the filmic style—the elements and the way they are composed.

This, as you can see, is almost a reversal of the right order of importance. I do not think this fact should surprise us. It is in the nature of the case, and I doubt if anything can be done about it.

T. S. Eliot makes a similar point in discussing the appreciation of Shakespeare's plays. He points out that in any of the plays "... you get several levels of significance. For the simplest auditors there is the plot, for the more thoughtful the characters and the conflict of characters, for the more literary the words and phrasing, for the more musically sensitive the rhythm, and for the auditors of greatest sensitiveness and understanding, a meaning which reveals itself gradually." And for the *best* auditors, let us add, the perfect unity of all these parts.

In considering the large public as spectators of art, we must realize that the hierarchy of recreations is commensurate to the hierarchy of needs. What is shown upon stage or screen will be appreciated in accordance with the degree of complexity in the art and the degree of capacity in the audience. The artist has every man to please, but each man according to his capacity. He must seek to please all, never the *élite* or the vulgar alone. Thus, for different levels of audience, there are (1) either different levels of art, or (2) different appreciable levels in a single work of art. And it is here that the movies, in one sense at least, succeed better than literature. For there are a greater number of levels in a single film than in most novels or plays. The good picture can be more readily enjoyed by the less trained spectator than the good novel, largely because a complex narrative can be more effectively communicated to even simple folk through pictures, rather than by words.

When it comes to the question of cultivating popular taste, of increasing the number of those who can appreciate the higher levels of cinematic art, we find ourselves confronted by two fundamental difficulties. In the first place, there is the simple fact that it is easier to *enjoy* the cinema than to *study* it. Study of cinematic style requires many repetitions and careful witnessing. In the second place, current movie criticism in general does little to help raise the level of popular appreciation. It does not help to cultivate a popular taste for what is good in movies as movies. We can safely say that the movies themselves have done far more to cultivate good taste than the critics; if anything, the latter have impeded it. I do not mean to say that good criticism alone can cause good art, but it can aid both the improvement of an art and sensitize the appreciation of it. This brings me to my last point—the critics.

### *The Critics and How They Judge*

Criticism is itself an art and must be good according to its own intrinsic standards. In this country there has been, as yet, no sustained artistic criticism of the movies, apart from such work as that of Gilbert Seldes, Mark Van Doren, and a few others. As an art the movies are still, for the most part,

vastly superior to the art of their critics. The latter make the same conspicuous mistakes as the public. They praise or damn a film for the wrong reasons: for the originality of the plot; for the story (which they describe at great length); for the social message; and for the incidentals. They are far more to blame than the public for making such mistakes and, in so far as they exert any influence, it hampers rather than aids the cultivation of popular taste for movies that are good as movies. (The Annual Prize Awards are an example of this. They are, of course, no worse than the Pulitzer Awards, but that's no compliment!) And Hollywood itself fails when (and then only) it sets itself up as a critic and expresses its standards. As long as it produces movies, it does an extraordinarily good job; but when it tries to formulate judgments of taste, it does no better than its worst critics.

Fortunately, there is one notable exception to this lament about the horrors of movie criticism—namely, the appreciation which

Walt Disney has received. By far his greatest achievement has been to make the critics applaud truly and essentially cinematic excellence, quite apart from the novelty of the story, the literary prestige of its source, the social implications of its plot, good acting, etc.

In conclusion let me say that the cinema seems to me, at present, to be far ahead of both the public and critics. It is much better art than either deserves in terms of their capacities to appreciate and to criticize. And it can also be said to be superior to the general run of novels and plays.

This is the miracle of Hollywood. I use Hollywood as the impersonal, collective name for the greatest artists in the field. To sneer at Hollywood is to behave like the pedants and empty high-brows who sneered at Shakespeare's plays in the days of Elizabeth. May I borrow a slogan to close with the prediction that when better movies are made, Hollywood will make them.

## The Film as Document and News

By EDGAR ANSTEY

*Mr. Anstey is Director of Productions, March of Time, Ltd., London.*

WHAT is the function of reality in the film today? When we ask for a greater number of films of actual events in the cinema program, we are invariably told that the cinema is a place for relaxation; that it is a place to which people go to escape from their everyday cares into a dream world of wish fulfillment. If you argue against that, that the newsreel still persists in being the most consistently popular part of the program, then you are told that the newsreels present only the most sensational and dramatic events. Moreover, you are told, newsreels are so short that they do not afford any real indication of the audience reaction to films of actuality.

However, although it may be true that because of limitations of time and space, the newsreel is bound to restrict itself in general to the most spectacular events; and although it is true, too, that the newsreel very rarely has opportunity to probe deeply

into the issues lying beneath the story it must tell in a mere shot or two, yet there are many of us who believe there is a big public for longer films of reality, and films that do not deal merely with sensational topical events. Which brings me to the subject of a second group of films, namely, British documentary films.

The British documentary film movement grew almost entirely as a result of the early efforts of one man, John Grierson, with whose name I expect many of you are familiar.

Grierson felt that there was a public for films dramatising those aspects of contemporary life which touch the experience of the common people today; that there were many people, a vast audience in fact, who were only too anxious to learn from the screen something more of the social structure of the world in which they lived.

I know that phrase, social structure, sounds a dull and tedious one. We in the



documentary movement realized that from the first. But we had great faith in the power and flexibility of the film medium and its capacity for entertaining presentation.

John Grierson started his movement with the Empire Marketing Board Film Unit and the function of that Unit in the first place was to bring the Empire alive on the screens of Great Britain. John Grierson came to the conclusion that the way to do that was not by means of personal story films, but that the Empire could be brought more properly and more vividly alive to its peoples in terms of broader issues effecting the mass of people; by revealing the social factors every day affecting the life of every member of the community. So he set to work in the first place to make a film called *Drifters*, to present Britain's fishing industry as a part of British social structure and its fishermen as human beings with responsibilities and rights in common with the audiences to which the film was to be shown. *Drifters* was made nine years ago, is still showing and remains one of Britain's most famous documentary films. The result of it was to arouse a great deal of new interest in Britain's long neglected fishing industry.

We found right from the start that there was a big and enthusiastic public for films of this sort. They differed from most of the other short interest films, travel films, industrial and advertising films, of their time because of a different approach to their subject matter. They set out to tell a story with all the creative responsibility—if you like, artistic responsibility—that story telling entails, whether the story is of fiction or of fact. Documentaries were soon being used, not only by the Empire Marketing Board, but by other government departments, by industries and social organizations. Here was a way of making contact with a wide public in terms of its own problems, its own jobs, its own experience.

More recently the documentary film has been adopted by public utility companies who are using it to give a broad, general picture of the services they offer to the country, not in terms of advertisement, but in terms of the solution of a social problem. Many such organizations in England have been intelligent enough to see that they

would only alienate their audiences by introducing any great measure of direct advertising in such films. But by bringing their problems alive on the screen in human rather than industrial terms, and by explaining how they were trying to solve them, these public service organizations saw that they might hope to stimulate a greater measure of public cooperation. And such organizations are coming increasingly today to understand how much their functioning depends on public cooperation.

Lately, some of the group of documentary producers trained by John Grierson have been making films on specific sociological problems, on housing, on malnutrition, on schools—on the fight to solve the problem of civilization by means of the social services—the real dramas of today.

They made *Children at School*, the purpose of which was to contrast the bad schools still remaining in large numbers in Great Britain with the good schools that in time will come to replace them. They made *Enough to Eat* a lecture film of a rather new kind. A piece of objective screen reporting, didactic, yet dramatic in its structural arrangement of documented fact. We went into the homes of mothers who had not enough money to feed their children properly and got them to explain their special difficulties to the camera and microphone. We used charts and diagrams to put the problem on a national basis.

*Housing Problems* was done in a rather similar way. There we took camera and microphone into bad but representative slum houses in the East End of London. While the camera was recording the appalling conditions there; overcrowding, rats and bugs, falling staircases, rain-water leaking through shored-up ceilings—the microphone was picking up from the housewife herself an account of the troubles she had to face living under such conditions; trouble to keep her children healthy, trouble to keep food fresh and clean and dry, all the sordid miseries that men and women must suffer in these surroundings. Used in this way the film can arouse the public conscience, can stimulate to action as can no other medium. And in our experience the cinema-going public, far from resenting such films is look-

ing for the simple interpretation in human terms of such pressing problems as housing and malnutrition which can so easily become meaningless sociological catchwords.

I do not want to spend too much time on the history of the documentary film because I think many of you are familiar with it already. Its success in England has been remarkable. Production increases steadily and considerably each year, unaffected by the slumps and booms of the fiction film industry. There are now twelve or thirteen directors working on the production of documentary films and more will be needed.

I want to go on now to talk about the *March of Time*. The *March of Time* goes now to 11,000 cinemas distributed in thirty-five countries, which represent the biggest distribution of any regular feature film. That distribution in itself refutes the argument that there is not a huge public demand for films dealing intelligently with the issues of the day, however controversial they may be. The *March of Time* shares the analytical qualities of the documentary with the topicality of the newsreel. It seeks to utilize every device of film technique to achieve an entertaining presentation of its subject-matter, knowing that dullness in films of reality arises less often from the nature of the subject matter than from lack of imagination in its presentation. There is no reason why, when fact comes in at the door, entertainment need fly out at the window.

The *March of Time* has taken up a shape, in many ways comparable with a good newspaper story. If you regard the newsreel as providing the headlines for your film journalism, then the *March of Time* often sets out to tell the full, considered, long-term story to follow the headline, a story which must be told with as much care for structure, continuity, tempo and dramatic emphasis as any fiction film story.

The *March of Time* seeks to reveal causes, to interpret, even to predict effects; to indicate political, economic, sociological trends, the forces moving beneath the surface of the news. And remember that often a minor humorous episode has as much significance in reflecting the age in which we live as a glaring front page headline.

We in the *March of Time* have always believed that the public will find appeal in

stories of this kind because it has an increasing curiosity to know the facts behind the news. You will find evidence of the growth of that healthy curiosity in the increase of newspaper space and radio time devoted to political, economic and social comment. The public has often been accused—particularly by those who say there is no place for fact in the cinema—of an appetite for sensationalism. It seems to me the public has an appetite not so much for sensationalism as for drama, and who will say that is not a healthy appetite? I think the success of the *March of Time* may be attributed to the fact that it has set out to cater to this appetite for drama and at the same time to satisfy the increasing public curiosity to know what is going on in the world.

To sum up the case for films of reality we might say that the newsreel proved the power of fact in its simplest form and that the *March of Time* and the documentary producers are proving the power of the factual story—the creative treatment of fact.

In conclusion. If we agree that the film is capable of doing more than merely to titillate emotions—if we agree that the film can interpret modern issues, can make more intelligible the achievements, problems and responsibilities of contemporary life, then the public will demand that it be enabled to do these things. For, in the long run, the common people have never permitted restriction of the full development of any medium of expression and will not do so today.

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ruary number we raised the topic as the subject of the Monthly Discussion, asking all interested persons and groups to give an opinion on the question: "Would you like all your pictures to be in color?"

We have received a number of replies to this question and the general consensus of opinion is best expressed, perhaps, by the findings of the Jacksonville Motion Picture Council, which held a general discussion of the subject. Their respective members were not enthusiastic for complete coloration of pictures; they felt that interiors were best reproduced in black and white or sepia, but favored color for exteriors, cartoons and

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# Fact and Opinion in the Motion Picture

By PAUL ROTH

*Mr. Roth is an English Documentary Film Producer, now visiting in the United States under the auspices of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, New York.*

IT gives me great pleasure to talk to representative members of the National Board of Review and to bring them greetings from members of the Documentary and Educational Film Movement in England. Over there we have a great respect for the Board and the work that it is doing; because, to us, the Board stands for freedom. In a world in which we see liberty suppressed on so many sides, freedom is still a precious thing to us in England. I once made a film about Peace. It was stopped from being shown by the censor. I gave the story to the newspapers and the following morning the censor removed his objections. Censorship must be fought; not given in to.

Without freedom for creative experiment, I don't believe that the motion picture can continue to exist; in fact, it couldn't have existed in the past. And in the protection of creative experiment, the National Board of Review has done much excellent work. It backed the German films, after the war, in this country. For that it was called pro-German. It backed the Russian pictures when they came over here. For that it was called pro-Red. All the way along the line it has stood for protecting, developing, and initiating creative experiment in film making, and many of the experiments in the films which it has backed have now become commonplaces in the ordinary Hollywood, English, and other commercial pictures.

In particular, we in the documentary film field are grateful to the Board for the way in which it backed Robert Flaherty, that great exponent of the real life film, and for what it did to help Flaherty put across his superb picture, *Moana*, to the American public. I know that long story and many members of the Board must be familiar with it. But the fact that the Board caused audiences to get together and make it possible for *Moana* to be accepted by the exhibitors, is,

I think, a significant indication of the value of audience organization.

We in England have established what we call the Documentary Film Movement, and it represents the only film experiment of our country. We do not depend upon the film trade itself for support, although we preserve friendly relations with it. From the beginning of our work in 1928, we have tried to do something new and vital in the movie world, and that, in itself, I think is important. Mr. Anstey, who is my colleague, has told you something about our movement and I needn't say more at this time.

It is always dangerous to prophesy as far as the motion picture is concerned, but I would like to throw out a pointer which you can take or leave, as you wish. For nearly forty years the movie has been devoted to the job of telling stories; it has illustrated books and plays and original stories. More recently, there has been a development in what I call the fantasy or trick film. You have got the finest example to date in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. But there is also a third development of the motion picture which has little to do with the other two. That is the motion picture when it is used to present facts; in newsreel travel films, educational films, and what we call documentary films. Better than any other medium, the motion picture can show one half of the world how the other half is living. I suggest that the film of fact is going to be linked closely with the world of education. That is happening in England now. All over the world, the motion picture as a medium for the expression of opinion and as an instrument for education, not only for children but for adults as well, is being developed and is, I think, giving birth of stimulating creative experiments. I see signs of this over here. Almost everywhere I go people are talking about the use of the motion picture in education. I believe the next most important experiments from a creative point of view in the motion picture field are going to arise from the use of the film in education.

If the National Board can extend its coverage to include protection for creative experiment in the educational film, I think it will be doing a most important service.

I will end by saying again that the fact that you represent audiences all over the United States; that you represent organized opinion, is extremely important and influential if that opinion is directed to the ends of freedom, and I am quite certain that you will continue to build up your membership.

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musicals. Color tended to make some of "our loveliest actresses appear coarse," it detracted from their expressiveness and animation; it was apt to become monotonous; it presented an artificial effect. It was remarked, however, that judgment could hardly be passed now, since in the future color would be as superior to its present stage of development as the talkies are now superior to their early forerunners in sound.

Another criticism was that color was not really suited to drama and tragedy. This was echoed by Miss Amy M. Coughton, of the Rochester Motion Picture Council discussing the topic in the Rochester Times Union. "Personally" she wrote "we never are conscious of wanting color in films except in cartoons, fantasy stories, or the period historical film with rococo backgrounds. In realistic stories, such as *A Star Is Born*, we find that some over-accented bit of color like Janet Gaynor's blood-red fingernails and the lurid final sunrise, stays in our memory to mar the otherwise satisfying impression of the picture. . . ."

As opposed to this is the question of how accurately we observe color in our everyday life? Reality provides both finger-nails and sunsets of as "vulgar" a hue as the cinematic version, with the difference that when we sit in a darkened theater concentrating eyes and mind upon the screen we are inclined to consider artificial many colors which are, in fact, most truthfully reproduced but whose existence we have not really noticed outside the theater. A defender of color writes suggesting the following simple test:—"After seeing a good color picture (perhaps *A Star Is Born* is about as good a guinea pig as any) make a point of

looking out of a high window at the surrounding buildings, trees, streets, and the flow of automobiles, buses, suits, dresses, hats and signs! Invariably one discovers the existence of numerous shades of color which one had never noticed before and—which is most important—colors which are discredited when they appear on the screen! Quite apart from your question of whether color is desirable in all pictures there is no doubt that a good color picture is a remarkable tonic to the perceptive faculties."

This correspondent (and his test is pretty sound) seems to be suggesting that the audience is to be blamed for not developing a proper appreciation. His stand is on very similar grounds to Mr. Jones'. We would welcome further letters on this topic from our readers for publication in the Magazine.

(Continued from page 2)

vaudeville troupers who invest their savings in a hotel and the troubles they have. Universal.

f ISLAND IN THE SKY—Gloria Stuart, Michael Whalen. Screen story by Jerry Cady. Directed by Herbert I. Leeds. A mystery interfering with the marriage of an assistant district attorney and his secretary, which she does more than anyone else to clear up. It gets along in lively fashion and holds the interest. 20th Century-Fox.

m \*JEZEBEL — See Exceptional Photoplays Dept., page 13.

f JOY OF LIVING, THE—Irene Dunne, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. Screen story by Herbert and Dorothy Fields. Directed by Tay Garnett. A comedy with songs, in which Irene Dunne, gallantly and self-sacrificingly supports a parasitic family till Douglas Fairbanks comes along with a yacht and teaches her how to get fun out of life. DKO Radio.

f JUDGE HARDY'S CHILDREN — Lewis Stone, Mickey Rooney. Screen play by Kan Van Riper based on characters created by Aurania Rouverol. Directed by George B. Seitz. A very amusing story of a small town man who receives a federal appointment and takes his family to Washington and their experiences and troubles in the big city. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f LAST STAND, THE—Bob Baker, Constance Moore, Fuzzy Knight. Screen story by Harry Hoyt. Directed by Joseph H. Lewis. An ordinary western of cattle rustling with nice riding and good cowboy singing. Universal.

(Continued on page 22)



# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS

## DEPARTMENT

This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of Exceptional and Honorable

Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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## Jezebel

*Adapted by Clements Ripley, Abem Finkel and John Huston from the play by Owen Davis, Sr., directed by William Wyler, photographed by Ernest Haller, musical score by Max Steiner. Produced and distributed by Warner Bros.*

### The cast

Julie .....	Bette Davis
Preston Dillard .....	Henry Fonda
Buck Cantrell .....	George Brent
Amy .....	Margaret Lindsay
Dr. Livingstone .....	Donald Crisp
Aunt Belle .....	Fay Bainter
Ted .....	Richard Cromwell
General Bogardus .....	Henry O'Neill
Mrs. Kendrick .....	Spring Byington
Dick Allen .....	Gordon Oliver
Jean La Cour .....	John Litel
Molly Allen .....	Janet Shaw
Zette .....	Theresa Harris
Stephanie Kendrick .....	Margaret Early
Huger .....	Irving Pichel
Gros Bat .....	Eddie Anderson
Ti Bat .....	Stymie Beard
Uncle Cato .....	Lou Payton
De Lastruc .....	George Renevant

THEY talk about this as if it had some connection with "Gone with the Wind"—a forerunner, by-product, or what-not. It can stand quite well on its own, thank you, and in all fairness it might be mentioned that *Jezebel* was written, and destined to be a movie, before the public had ever gone crazy over *Scarlet O'Hara*. It merely happens that Margaret Mitchell's novel and Owen Davis' play both concern belles of the ante-bellum South, with more attention to feline characteristics than used to be fashionable in depicting Southern heroines; otherwise they are as far apart as Georgia and Louisiana, or the fifties and the sixties, or yellow-jack epidemic and war. *Jezebel*, in short, is no imitation, either in intention or in fact.

It is fundamentally that oldest of dramatic conflicts, the ego against the world. If a girl is so self-centered that everything outside her must go her way or no way at all, what is the result going to be? She's got to give in, or break—and breaking is likely to be some sort of insanity, recognized or not. In the semi-feudal life of the old South, when existence among the plantation owners flowered into a society and culture of a kind unknown anywhere else in this country, a manorial existence of apparently unchallengeable security, rich in power and ease and all the more gracious and refined amenities of living, such a girl, born in the right family, might well think she was the center of the universe. Such a girl was Julie, with her instinctive belief in a charming woman's power fortified by the special chivalry of the time and place she lived in. That her sense of power became twisted and defiant (she could be called spoiled in a very literal meaning of the word) and that defeat should make her neurotically cruel, was a part of her peculiar personality. She was an example of the old classic law that character is destiny, and she fulfilled that destiny to the last tragic gasp—for her final exit, on the wagon of plague victims bound for the leper island, was no act of expiation: it was the only possible ultimate exertion of her selfish will, to have her man dying if she could not have him alive.

For all the magnolias and moonlight, beaux and belles and romantic trappings, *Jezebel* is far from the usual romantic southern tale. It is a penetrating study of character in a setting whose conventional sur-

face handsomeness does not nullify its essential truth and solidity. As in any good movie its excellences came from many sources—good plotting and writing, a director and photographer who know how to make the thing flow along with dramatic pictorial effect, and a cast that makes its story a record of living people. It has enough romantic glamor to interest those who look only upon the surface, enough substance to satisfy those who like the surface to be a truthful expression of depths beneath, and—finally—the ultimate satisfaction of the demands of justice which art can supply though life so seldom does.

Julie's tragedy was that eventually everyone saw through her—saw her as selfish and unreasonable and devilish—and that she was intelligent enough to realize it. The man she threw over remained devoted to her according to his code of southern gentleman, even to fighting a duel and getting killed—but he knew what it was he threw away his life for, and she knew he knew. The man she chose to love escaped, finally, from her cat-and-mouse methods, and her last crushing discovery was that her feeling of power was a delusion—he *had* escaped completely. What she really was was mirrored in the aversion that her people could not hide from her, for all their chivalry. But she could only go on being herself, even to probable death.

It is unusual for a movie to take such a subject as this and handle it so unevasively, with such clean surgical skill. It is not morbid—many people will see it as just an entertaining tale of a spoiled girl who gets what is coming to her, which is a spectacle far from unsatisfying. But it has its pathological aspects for those who can see and appreciate such things, clear and unvarnished, treated realistically and vividly.

At the center of it is Bette Davis, growing into an artistic maturity that is one of the wonders of Hollywood. The erratic and tempestuous career of this actress has saved her from playing sweet heroines and glamor girls and given her chances at parts that most players out for popularity would balk at—the result is an experience that has made her unique, in a field of character creation that is practically empty. Her Julie

is the peak of her accomplishment so far, and what is ahead is unpredictable, depending on her luck and on the wisdom of her producers. At any rate she is in no rut, nor likely to get into one without a peculiarly efficient struggle.

The cast that not only surrounds her but helps her immeasurably, is almost uniformly excellent. Henry Fonda, George Brent, Henry O'Neill, Richard Cromwell, Gordon Oliver, Fay Bainter—each aids unerringly in the creation of a social and personal background that gives Julie the inevitability of real life. Only Margaret Lindsay seems somehow wooden, and unfortunately she is so prominent in her last scene with Julie, and so ineffectual, that that scene becomes the one ambiguous scene in the whole picture, blurring what should have been a clean rounding out of Julie's essential character.

William Wyler directed the picture, and its excellence must in the last summing up go back to him. He did a fine creative job.  
(*Rated Exceptional*) J. S. H.

## Un Carnet de Bal

(LIFE DANCES ON)

*Written and directed by Julien Duvivier, with dialogue by Henri Jeanson, Jean Sarment and Bernard Zimmer, photographed by Colin. Sets by Pimenoff, Music by Jaubert. English titles by John Primi and Herman G. Weinberg. Produced at the Studios Francois I in France, exteriors filmed in Italy, the Alps and Marseilles. Distributed in U. S. A. by A. F. E. Corporation.*

### The cast

Christine .....	Marie Bell
Madame Audie .....	Francoise Rosay
Jo .....	Louis Jouvet
Alain Regnault .....	Harry Baur
Eric Irvin .....	Pierre-Richard Willm
Francois Patusset .....	Raimu
Dr. Thierry .....	Pierre Blanchar
Fabien .....	Ferandel
Jacques .....	Robert Lynen

HERE is another film from France that comes loaded with international honors, notably the Gold Cup given at the Venice Biennial Film Exposition as an award of the International First Grand Prize. It will assuredly be heard of again at the end of the year when our own critics hand out their laurels. For its American





Christine (Marie Bell) dreams of her youth in "Life Dances On"

appearance it has taken on a title that is the only pseudo thing about it: a closer translation of what it was called in France—something like *A Dance Card*—would have been less movieishly glamorous than *Life Dances On*, but it would have been more literal and a clearer hint of what the picture is about.

Duvivier—certainly one of the world's best film directors: what other director could have done, in such masterly fashion, such a varied list as *Poil de Carotte*, *Marie Chapdelaine*, *The Golem* and *Golgotha*?—when he wrote his own story set himself a particularly hard job as director. He gave himself six different stories, each capable of enlargement into feature length, all to be woven together in such a way that the final effect would be a single unity. A woman, still beautiful in her thirties, is left a widow by the death of her rich husband. Life seems over for her, and yet what she has to look back on seems sadly sterile and

empty. Marriage had brought her nothing to carry with her through the long remaining years. Looking over old papers and letters she comes across the program of her first ball, and the names of the boys who danced with her that night when she was sixteen. Everything was so fresh and lovely then—in her memory, which beautifies the recollection of that night and those boys with nostalgic glamor, what was real is changed into something that never could have existed outside a dream-world. But it sets her to wondering: every one of those boys whispered sweet, romantic things to her as they danced—wouldn't life have been different, better, if she had chosen one of them, any one of them, for a husband, instead of the man she did choose? Maybe it isn't too late—maybe she can still find the happiness she missed. She determines to set out on a search for the past, not with any actual plan, only a vague hope that she can pick up

some thread again that will lead her back to life.

On the thread of this romantic search of hers are hung the actualities her search discovers—what the years have made of the boys she remembers with such vague fondness. From the little town where they all grew up together all but two have gone out to become far different men from what their boyhood might have foretold. One killed himself when she married someone else—and it is his mother Christine finds, living in a harmlessly insane delusion that her boy has only stepped out for a moment and will be back directly. Another, from being a promising lawyer, has moved gradually and inexorably into the Parisian underworld. A gifted musician, hurt by her careless indifference to his devotion, has become a priest, the trainer of a choir of boys in a cathedral. Another has become an Alpine guide, with the mountains for his love. An ambitious seeker for a political career has become the mayor of a provincial town, just about to marry his cook when she finds him. Perhaps the most gifted of all, who became a doctor, has drifted down to a sordid, epileptic existence on the Marseilles waterfront. Another has stayed at home and become the town's barber and hair-dresser—with him she goes to another ball, in the same hall her memories have so decked out with imaginary beauty, and faces the final shedding of her illusions. The past cannot be recaptured—it would not be worth recapturing if it could be. There is only one girlhood admirer left, the one she has thought most of, and she decides not to search for him. But she learns that he is dead, leaving a lonely son. This son she takes to devote her own future to.

All these lives, strung together in the hodge-podge fashion of life itself, are singularly rich and real, and in her role of walking back into them again as an observer, the woman—Christine—in a curiously eloquent negative way manages also to reveal herself, to give dimension to her own emptiness and futility. One has to accept in the beginning the pattern on which the picture is built—the device that supplies the

reason for putting such divergent and separated life-stories together in one film; but once that pattern is accepted, the picture takes on an extraordinary scope and vividness, all framed in the engrossing and poignant theme of life's jumble and disillusion and compensatory adjustments. The idea of it might sound hopeless and depressing, but it is all too much aglow with humaneness and wise sympathy to be anything of the sort.

Rarely, if ever, can a film have been made to live by so many first-rate actors. France's best give their best to it. Francoise Rosay, Raimu, Louis Jouvet, Harry Baur, Pierre Blanchar, Fernandel—these, to pick out only the most eminent, are all names that anyone acquainted with the best French films of recent years cannot have forgotten. They are once more unforgettable in this film, along with Duvivier's masterly direction, and a dramatic use of the camera to underline situation and mood that is as individual as it is effective.

(Rated Exceptional)

J. S. H.

## To the Victor

*Adapted by J. B. Williams from Alfred Ollivant's story "Owd Bob" ("Bob, Son of Battle"), directed by Robert Stevenson, photographed by Jack Cox, settings by Vetchinsky, musical score by Louis Levy. Produced and distributed by Gaumont-British.*

### The cast

McAdam	Will Fyffe
David	John Loder
Jeanie	Margaret Lockwood
Tammas	Graham Moffat
Samuel	Moore Marriott
Thwaites	Wilfred Walter
Dr. Parker	Bromley Davenport
Policeman	H. F. Maltby

THIS picture comes along at a time when we had almost given up wondering why British producers bothered even to suggest that their pictures were made at home. The things they turned out were recognizable more often by their bad and obvious home-cooking of other countrys' screen hits than by any intrinsically domestic faults or virtues, and with the exception of the producers of documentary films and Alfred Hitchcock there have been few British producers who have bothered to wonder



if they might'nt be more successful if they drew on first-hand material when they made a picture. While countless aspects of American life have shocked and delighted British audiences; while French, German, Russian and Swedish makers have all exploited their

right foot. And since it is fortunate in its makers and technically proficient, the net result is one of the best British pictures to-date.

Robert Stevenson, director of *Nine Days a Queen* and the popular *King Solomon's*



Will Fyffe and his dog in "To the Victor"

cities, countrysides and national characteristics on the screen, the British have generally been content to popularize an England peopled entirely with cavalcades of defunct monarchs and scarlet pimpernels. We know we are in England rather than in Basutoland only by a preliminary shot of a London bobby silhouetted against the Houses of Parliament.

Perhaps *To the Victor* will mark a change in this obvious stupidity. Quite apart from its other values it has the merit of being drawn essentially from familiar, domestic sources; its portraits of life could never have been shot outside the British Isles, and while this alone is by no means a guarantee of quality it is definitely a starting-off with the

*Mines*, has made it his best job of all. It is speedy and efficient to a degree rare in English pictures; its story is well-knit and at the same time full of unusual material, and the natural setting of Scottish moorland is pleasing to the eye and demands little complicated use of the camera. Also it has one or two of those sudden, unexpected interludes which stick in the minds of an audience often far longer than the essential sequences—little interjections which seem to arrive from nowhere and are vastly helpful in raising the key of appreciation. While much of the credit must go to Will Fyffe, who here joins that select but glorious company of villains who do *not* repent and reform in the final fade-out, it is Stevenson who is to be con-

gratulated on perfect co-ordination of the material and the easy naturalness which is scarcely ever lacking in the picture.

It doesn't help much to go into details of the story; it is just simple enough to look thin on paper. The general idea is of rivalry between two farmers and their sheep-dogs, complicated, of course, by the one farmer's daughter falling in love with her father's rival. (There is also a spot of canine love-interest, whereby hangs a neat twist in the tail of the story.) Anyway the action hinges mainly upon the annual sheep-dog trials when the two dogs will compete in driving sheep over a hazardous course. To the victor belong the silver cup, the fat bets, the girl, the prestige, and everything the world of a little rural community can offer, so the running of the dogs has an intense excitement about it as well as the fascination of darting, skilful movement, easy to follow and a delight to the eyes. Dashing away from the tense crowd, each dog in turn disappears over the hills, to return miraculously with half-a-dozen sheep ferreted out from a hiding-place, and to proceed to run them safely over a stone wall, an open cart, a narrow plank bridge, around obstacles and safely into the home-pen. This is a real highlight of the picture and it goes as smoothly as cream, with its supporting shots catching beautifully the spirit of an open-air competition, with its conglomerate groups of surly farmers, pompous cops, local wits, judges, tipsters, etc. all gripped together for a few thrilling moments.

The rest of the story works itself out nicely, taking you through Scottish valleys, cottages and villages and, especially, to the local "pub" which supplies everything from assorted personalities to betting and bottle-throwing, as well as one of those lovely surprise interludes mentioned earlier—the almost unknown art of playing hand-bells, interjected suddenly from nowhere. The cast is quite adequate, though John Loder might well have sacrificed a little of his immaculate clothing and accent to conform with an essentially Scottish setting, and Graham Moffat and Moore Marriott do the comic side admirably. The gem of the piece, of course, is Will Fyffe; as the drunken, selfish owner of the defeated dog he plays his part to perfection, winning sympathy

where he deserves none, using his wiles to gain more and then mocking its donors, and still snatching the affection of the whole audience simply through being a living portrait of a man fighting against everybody on principle without caring a damn for anybody but his dog. With so strong a combination of technical efficiency and naturalness this picture deserves a really big audience.—N.D.

(Rated Exceptional)

## The Adventures of Chico

*Written, directed and photographed by Stacy and Horace Woodard, musical score by Dr. Edward Kelenyi, produced and distributed by Woodard Productions.*

TWO brothers took a vacation from their Hollywood work to make this picture for their own pleasure and satisfaction. They knew what they wanted to do and how to do it. Their experience had been gained in such excellent things as the *Struggle to Live* series, and one of them had done some of the photography on *The River*. They planned a simple story of outdoor life, packed up their cameras and went to Mexico. The result is something that belongs, in a film library, on the shelf with Robert Flaherty's *Nanook*, among pictures that are taken down and looked at year after year till they get to be called classics. Time will not dim its freshness and loveliness.

The "adventures" are merely what happen in the everyday life of a ten-year-old peon boy who lives alone with his father on the great plateau of Northern Mexico, an almost primitive existence, solitary and close to nature. They grow and grind their own corn, the father seems to make his living by catching quail, and the boy's chief job appears to be tending their herd of goats. Animals and birds are his only companions, and the main thread of his story is his friendship with that alert, intelligent and courageous bird which the Mexicans call "*paisano*"—"comrade"—the roadrunner, or chaparral cock.

Chico's own voice tells his story—a piping, boy-voice in broken English that bridges the gaps between the episodes and runs on as a commentary like what the newsreels have accustomed us to. This device creates

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## Generals Without Buttons

Mayer-Burnstyn release of Forrester-Parant production. Adapted by Jacques Maury from 'La Guerre des Boutons,' novel by Louis Pergaud. Directed by Jacques Daroy.

### The cast

Jean Delcourt	Jean Murat
Aline Sorbier	Claude May
Simon	Saturnin Fabre
Lebrac	Serge Grave
La Crique	Marcel Mouloudji
Aztec	Jacques Tavoli
Father of Lebrac	Rognoni
Father of Gibus	Calaman
Gaspard	Bouzaquet
Marie Tintin	Vera Phares
Tavie	Clairette Fournier
A kid	GINETTE MARBOEUF

**W**HEN a 16th century French village wants rain for its cabbages and its neighbor village wants sun to ripen its grapes, and both meet one day at a shrine to pray for their respective wants, the result may be the beginning of an ancient feud, lasting until the present day. Such, at least, is the burden of this ironical picture, whose makers take for granted the strife between the village adults and concentrate on the lighter aspect—the struggle as carried on by the children of the antagonists. Led by their tow-headed generals, uniformed in torn pants and shirts and picking up their ammunition as they march along the stony roads, the children continue their ancestors' battles, determined to wipe out previous insults through the awful humiliation of leaving their enemies pant- and button-less.

This picture has been widely billed as a satire on war—a description which hangs round its neck like a brick. For its many little ironies and military analogies are far too light and playful to suggest to a contemporary audience any modeling on the goose-stepping machinery which fills the screen in most news-reels. The picture is simply an excellent kid-comedy, showing kids at their most natural; in action, in the schoolroom, and in private parley and plot, and any attempt to up with a heavy hand and mold it into a grim comment on international reality is a detraction from its chief merits. In fact the curtain scenes and lines are the only ones in which the

analogy is pressed, and the result is the only hollow note in the whole production.

Some sort of a love-interest exists, between the Mayor of the one village (he looks far more like a Riviera playboy than the Conklin type we have come to accept as typical of the French mayor) and a pretty school teacher in the other village, but it is so entirely unessential that its effect is simply a comedy one. The special excellences lie in the sly close-ups and character-sketches: when the hunt for the treasured buttons is under way and the angel-eyed child is being rebuked by the mayor for his naughtiness and takes the chance gently to detach a loose fastener from his Honor's jacket; the class-room scenes; the revealing little glimpses into the children's homes, and the respective roles allotted to members of the gangs. With the cast showing again how excellently French children can carry the whole burden of a picture, and the whole set against a memorable background of hills, valleys and dusty roads—a perfect setting for long shots of maneuvers, ambushes, victorious campaigns, and the straggling home of the downcast defeated ones, their hands thrust into the depths of their pockets to support their buttonless pants. N. D.

(Rated Honorable Mention)

## The Lubitsch Touch and an Old Theme

**E**NTHUSIASTS for "Mr. Deeds" will find plenty of shocking tortures in Gary's new role. The peoples' darling has been pushed about to the limit of his endurance; the honest, slightly winsome pan of yesterday has been twisted into sardonic lines and the firmness of character and common sense that once underlay his actions are here degenerated into common or garden hardboiledness. The pockets are filled with money and seven wives have passed through them before Miss Colbert, the penniless daughter of a French count, takes on the job of taming Bluebeard. This she succeeds in doing by the simple expedient of keeping him at arm's length in scene

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## Community Motion Picture Activities Reported at the Board Conference

FROM month to month, since our Conference in January, we have been bringing to our readers reports of community activities, as given by various delegates at the Conference. So many communities were represented on a one session program that the reports had to be sketchy and few speakers were able to give a very adequate idea of the extensive programs conducted in their communities. However, all show indication of a wide variety of activities and interests, and our readers, from their experience, will be able to read between the lines and know how much time and effort has gone into the working out of the ideas stated here. We give in this issue reports from:

**Mrs. W. V. Fiske,  
President, Cleveland Cinema Club**

THE Cleveland Cinema Club was organized in 1916. So, you see, we have been in existence for some time, and The National Board of Review has worked with us. Maybe we are the grandparents of these different groups.

Our organization was formed to study the educational and cultural phases of the motion picture, and we have followed that through these years. We have formed groups of young people all through the city. In the suburbs which range from fifteen miles on one side of Cleveland to twenty-two miles on the other side, we have now about one thousand young folks who are studying motion picture appreciation. They are doing a marvelous work. We go and visit them and see what they are doing.

I will not say that this is done in the schools. It is done through school children, with the consent of the superintendents of the various districts, and we meet in the schools. Ofttimes one of the teachers will supervise, but having been an old-time school teacher myself, I feel that school teachers have just about all they can look after without having too many club activities. So we do what we can through our club.

We study, we pre-view pictures, and again

we have reports. There is a thing that one of the children brought to my attention which since has been uppermost in my thoughts. It is that the titles of so many pictures are misleading. If they are historical pictures, you would never know it from the titles. And what can we do? That is one thing I should like to leave in the minds of everyone of you here. Is there something that we, as a group of folks, could do, something to impress the thought that the titles of pictures are very misleading?

One of the other things that we have done in Cleveland was to go to the Superintendent of Schools and ask him if he would be willing to have a motion picture appreciation class in the night schools. We started this thinking probably we might be able to educate people to take it up in small groups. We began, I think, with fifty-seven the first term. This last term we had three hundred. So you see that people are awakening to the fact of motion picture appreciation and in turn will know how to work with the young people.

Someone asked me if we cooperated with the theatres. I can truthfully say every theatre in Cleveland cooperates with the Cleveland Cinema Club in every form. If there is any picture of particular importance coming, they will call our club or members of it, ask us if we want to see a preview, which we do, and then we will get out a letter, as one of the other ladies told us they did. We telephone and we send out post cards and do everything we can to help it.

We never knock a picture. We might keep very, very quiet, and I think that is the most effective kind of knocking. If we keep particularly quiet over any kind of picture, the theatre man will say, "The Cinema Club is not back of us on this." We get out the Cleveland Cinema Club Bulletin, five issues during the club year. We also get out a list of films that we send to the schools at the request of the School Board,



and these are used all through the schools for the noonday hour.

We had a thought in our mind that we would like to do something for the shut-ins in Cleveland and the neighborhood and wondered what we could do. We went to the President of the Variety Club there and told him we thought it would be marvelous if something could be done to show pictures to the shut-ins, and asked if we could have a projection machine. He said, "That is a wonderful thought, but it is something I do not believe a small club could undertake." However, the Variety Club took it up, with our assistance, and bought a projecting machine. They have it on a chassis, and go to every shut-in who is recommended to them, whether it is a club or just a small family, and show them pictures. The union has been very much pleased with the work we are doing and through them we have a man to operate the machine. To my way of thinking that is something of outstanding value in our work—helping those who cannot help themselves.

\* \* \* \*

**Mrs. Charles W. Swift,  
Chairman New York State D. A. R.  
Better Films Committee, President,  
Elmira Motion Picture Council**

ELMIRA is a small city of fifty thousand. We have five theatres, three public high schools, one Catholic high school, and two suburban high schools, three libraries and one suburban library. Perhaps we can accomplish things in our Council not possible in a larger city, because we have the opportunity to know personally those in the clubs and organizations, the school people and those of the church groups and the theatre managers as well.

We have wonderful cooperation from all in the community. Thirty-seven groups belong to our Council, and each one has a motion picture committee and a chairman. These chairmen come to our Council meetings, held once a month, for a round table discussion, to secure information to carry back to their groups.

We have concentrated this year on two things. First, in interesting the groups to learn something of the detail of what goes

into the making of motion pictures. We have found so many people who thought that all the producers had to do was to turn a crank and pour out a movie and there it was, and all the managers had to do was unlock their doors and sell tickets and people came in. It has been quite an eye-opener to a great many people to know there was so much detail in the production and exhibition of motion pictures. It has made for far greater appreciation of the good things.

The second thing has been to promote photoplay appreciation in our high schools. We have given research exhibits and study guides to the schools for the English and history teachers, whichever they wanted, and these were passed on to the school library where all children in the school could see them.

We have had calls from the grade schools for such pictures as *Maid of Salem*, *The Plainsman* and *Wells Fargo*. They particularly liked *Wells Fargo* because of the map at the beginning; it seemed to give them such a different idea about it. It has just been reported to us that one boy is writing his senior thesis on photoplay appreciation, so we feel that we have made a start that way. We have helped the girls' High School Club and other high school groups to start motion picture study, and also some church groups.

We have succeeded in getting at one theatre a family program for Friday and Saturday. This is for adolescent children and their parents and has worked out so well that more have come than can be taken care of. So at another theatre we have started a program for smaller children with cartoons and other things they like and a club where they sing and have a grand time. They have enough from this and so they go home and do not wait to see the program meant for older children.

One of the outstanding projects of our Motion Picture Council this last year was bringing to Elmira some outstanding foreign pictures, usually only shown in the large cities. The managers felt that there were not enough people in Elmira who would appreciate and patronize such a program, but we assured them we thought there

were, and so we started selling tickets. We brought *Man of Aran*, *Blue Light* and *La Maternelle*. We have Elmira College, as you know, and they particularly wanted *La Maternelle* for the French Department. When we were about half through selling out tickets the manager got panicky thinking it was going to be a failure and asked us to change our night. We did not want to do this, but it seemed the only thing to do. We had all that extra work and yet we sold our tickets and packed the theatre for every performance and the managers were certainly surprised. They tried afterwards to do it in another school city in New York State about our size and it was a failure. So we feel perhaps they just did not know how to do it without the support of a Council. Incidentally, we made a nice little sum to carry on the work of our Council. It also increased the interest in the work and made the community more conscious of our Council.

But I feel that one of the most important things is the greatly increased interest of the young people in the outstanding films. The teachers say that it has promoted better reading in all their English classes, with the students reading about twice as much as they usually did.

### The Lubitsch Touch

(Continued from page 19)

after scene, holding out against all assaults and entreaties until the wretched man is obliged to take refuge in a nervous breakdown. The final submission takes place in a lunatic asylum, with Gary plainly dressed in a straitjacket.

From the standpoint of popular sentiment *Bluebeard's 8th Wife* is hardly a Cooper vehicle, and it is one that will enrage many of his admirers, male and female. For those who are not specially attached, however, a certain amount of good comedy is supplied patchily by both stars and well supported by Edward Everett Horton, Warren Hymer and others. What is lacking chiefly is any sustained amusement and plot development; also failure on the part of Mr. Lubitsch to strike sparks from a pretty rusty old iron.

N.D.

### Chico

(Continued from page 18)

a curious kind of intimacy between the screen and its audience, as if the chief actor were taking you by the hand and leading you into a land in which you would not find your way alone. And what you find in that land becomes vivid and vital by its very simplicity, and something quite different from mere pictures of wild life because everything in it has its connection with the boy or his father or their work. From the amusing little "snookum bears," who always seem to be waiting to sneak into the hut and steal the food, to the lion leaping into the goat corral—from gentle to savage—all the wild things seem to exist in relation to the boy, coming to an exciting climax in a fight to the death between a rattlesnake and the road-runner bird that has become Chico's friend.

One has to go back to *Sequoia* to find an animal picture to compare with this one. By comparison *Sequoia* seems staged and contrived, with no essential relation between humans and animals. Chico's adventures are as unforced and real as if no camera had ever come within a hundred miles of them, growing simply and naturally out of the everyday comings and goings of a boy going about his daily tasks. In his solitary but infinitely varied and fascinating contacts with birds and beasts of the Mexican countryside Chico's life is an enchanting idyl.—J.S.H. (Rated Honorable Mention)

(Continued from page 12)

- m LAW OF THE UNDERWORLD—Chester Morris, Anne Shirley. Based on story "The Last Game" by Al H. Woods. Directed by Lew Landers. A girl and her fiance are used as innocent pawns by the leader of a gang of jewel robbers. RKO Radio.
- f LONE WOLF IN PARIS, THE—Francis Lederer, Frances Drake. Based on story by Louis Joseph Vance. Directed by Albert S. Rogell. A story of an ex-jewel thief who helps a princess to recover the crown jewels of her kingdom. Columbia.
- f \*MAD ABOUT MUSIC—Deanna Durbin, Herbert Marshall. Screen story by Marcella Burke and Frederick Kohner. Directed by Norman Taurog. A bright and amusing picture with Deanna Durbin at her best. Most of the story takes place at a girl's school in Switzerland, where one of the girls, separated from her screen actress-mother, finally makes her dreams come true. The music is nice and the entire case is excellent. Universal.



- f \*MERRILY WE LIVE—Constance Bennett, Brian Ahearne, Billie Burke, Alan Mowbray. Screen story by Eddie Moran and Jack Jevne. Directed by Norman Z. McLeod. A goofy farce about the sufferings of a family from the mother's propensity for taking in tramps to give them new starts in life. A very competent cast makes a hilarious lark of a series of highly absurd situations. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Reviewed in the Exceptional Photoplays Dept., March, 1938.
- f MR. MOTO'S GAMBLE — Peter Lorre. Screen story by Charles Balden and Jerry Cady. Directed by James Tinling. A murder during a prize fight—which is solved by a Japanese professor of criminology. The atmosphere and minor characters are more interesting than the solution of the mystery. 20th Century-Fox.
- f OVER THE WALL—Dick Foran, June Travis, John Litel. Directed by Frank McDonald. Fundamentally the story of a scrappy Irishman who eventually learned self-control, though it took an experience in prison to teach him. The prison atmosphere should be authentic as the story was written by Warden Lewis E. Lawes. Warner Bros.
- f RAWHIDE—Lou Gehrig, Smith Bellew, Evelyn Knapp. Screen story by Dan Jarrett. Directed by Ray Talor. Lou Gehrig goes west for a quiet ranch life intending to give up baseball, but runs into a racket that gives him plenty of adventure till time for spring training comes around again. 20th Century-Fox.
- f REBECCA OF SUNNYBROOK FARM—Shirley Temple, Randolph Scott, Gloria Stuart. Suggested by the Kate Douglas Wiggin story. Directed by Allan Dwan. An excellent Shirley Temple picture, though it has practically nothing to do with the story that gives it its title. Shirley is a radio star in this, singing, dancing and being her usual bright and amazing self. 20th Century-Fox.
- f SALLY, IRENE AND MARY—Alice Faye, Fred Allen, Tony Martin, Jimmy Durante. Screen story by Karl Tunberg and Don Ettlinger. Directed by William A. Seiter. Three manicurists set out to make fame in show business, arriving at a happy ending with some romance and a good deal of fun on the way—with songs. 20th Century-Fox.
- f SARA LAR SIG FOLKVETT (Sara Learns Manners) — Tutta Rolf, Kotti Chave. Scenario by Gosta Stevens. Directed by Gustaf Molander. The attractive servant of a poor family comes into money, stays on with the family to learn manners and falls in love with the son. Complications arise through the son not wanting a rich wife, and the desperate spending of the money. This dated theme is well enough handled to make a really amusing comedy, with Tutta Rolf, charming, versatile lead, carrying off high honors. In Swedish with English titles. Scandinavian Talking Pictures.
- f \*STORM IN A TEACUP—Vivien Leigh, Sara Allgood, Rex Harrison. Based on stage play by Bruno Frank. Directed by Victor Saville. A highly amusing and entertaining comedy of a pompous Scotch Provost who loses his standing with the people of his town over the matter of a dog license. The love element is supplied by a young English newspaper man, who comes to the defense of the dog, and the daughter of the Provost. The acting and direction are both excellent. United Artists.
- f TIP-OFF GIRLS—Mary Carlisle, Lloyd Nolan. Screen story by Maxwell Shane, Robert Yost and Stuart Anthony. Directed by Louis King. An exciting story of G-men who become hijackers in order to catch the racketeers who are hijacking the cross country trucks carrying valuable merchandise. Paramount.
- fj \*TO THE VICTOR—See Exceptional Photoplays Dept., page 16.
- m WALKING DOWN BROADWAY—Claire Trevor, Michael Whalen, Phyllis Brooks, Tom Beck. Screen story by Robert Chapin and Karen De Wolf. Directed by Norman Foster. A year in the life of six showgirls, the disasters that overtook some of them, and the outstanding success of the one who quit Broadway. The direction gives humaneness and life to a plot that gets pretty melodramatic at times. 20th Century-Fox.
- f WHEN G-MEN STEP IN—Don Terry, Jacqueline Wells. Screen story by Arthur T. Horman. Directed by C. C. Coleman. Interesting as something of an exposure of the kind of rackets that exist nominally for charitable drives, sweepstake lotteries, etc. A man at the head of one is caught by his brother who is a G-man. Columbia.
- m WHERE IS MY CHILD?—Celia Adler. Screen play by Henry Lynn. Directed by Abraham Leff. Harrowing tale of an immigrant mother incarcerated in an asylum so that a rich couple may keep possession of her baby. Baby grows up and becomes an alienist, finally rescuing his mother from her asylum prison. A moving story rather hampered by heavy direction. Recommended for Jewish audiences. In Yiddish. English sub-titles. Menorah Pictures, Inc.

## SHORT SUBJECTS

### CARTOONS AND COMEDIES

- fj BE UP TO DATE (Betty Boop Cartoon)—Betty and her traveling department store. Paramount.
- f CANNED FISHING (Our Gang)—A thwarted scheme to play hookey and go fishing. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj DONALD'S NEPHEWS (Donald Duck Cartoon)—Donald is visited by his nephews and exerts child guidance theories on them. RKO Radio.
- fj FEED THE KITTY (Oswald Cartoon)—A dog's friendship for some kittens. Universal.
- f HONEST LOVE AND TRUE (Betty Boop Cartoon)—Betty in a satire on the old melodrama of the Northwest mountie who always gets his man. Very amusing. Paramount.
- fj HOUSE BUILDER-UPPER (Popeye Cartoon)—Popeye builds a house for Olive Oil but it folds up. Paramount.
- f HOW TO FIGURE YOUR INCOME TAX—Robert Benchley gives one of his characteristic lectures. For those who like the Benchley type of humor.

- f LITTLE BANTAM WEIGHT (Happy Harmony Cartoon)—A rooster teaching his chicks to be champions. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj MICKEY'S TRAILER (Mickey Mouse Cartoon)—Mickey demonstrates his ultra-modern trailer. RKO Radio.
- fj MOTH AND THE FLAME (Silly Symphony)—In a finely colored setting a pretty moth plays with fire. RKO Radio.
- f OLD RAID MULE (Andy Clyde)—Andy always gets the worst of a bargain. Very amusing comedy. Columbia.
- j STAR IS HATCHED, A (Merrie Melodies Cartoon)—What happened to Miss Duck's ambitions. Done in technicolor. Vitaphone.
- j TEARS OF AN ONION—Color cartoon of a poor little onion whom nobody wants around. Paramount.
- f THREE MEN IN A BOAT (Our Gang)—Alfalfa's ingenious play to win a boat race. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj WYNKEN, BLYNKEN AND NOD (Silly Symphony)—The adventures of three little children in a dream, done in technicolor. RKO Radio.

## MUSICALS, NOVELTIES AND SERIALS

- f CANARY COMES ACROSS, THE—Eric Rhodes. Comedy surprisingly worked into a prison story in which a warden's daughter and a glee-club of convicts figure. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f COMMUNITY SING NO. 5—Singing song favorites. Columbia.
- f HOLLYWOOD STAR REPORTER NO. 3—Ted Husing takes us to highlights on Broadway. Paramount.
- f LIFE IN SOMETOWN, U.S.A.—An amusing and provocative sketch about what might happen if some of the laws still on statute books were strictly enforced. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj LONE RANGER, THE (Serial) NOS. 6-10—Starring Lee Powell and Herman Brix. Screen story by Benny Shipman. Directed by William Markey and John English. A serial of the pioneer days. All but one of a band of rangers are wiped out by the outlaws and the lone ranger swears vengeance. Plenty of excitement with Silver, the beautiful white horse, as a symbol of law and order. Republic.
- fj MYSTERIOUS PILOT, THE (Serial) NOS. 7-15—Starring Frank Hawks and Dorothy Sebastian. Story "The Silver Hawk" by William Byron Mowery. Directed by Spencer Gordon Bennet. A serial laid in the Canadian Northwest, with an aerial photographer and a Mountie becoming involved in the mystery surrounding a girl's flight from some unknown peril. At the end of each episode Frank Hawks gives a lesson in flying to a young boy that is interesting, instructive and easy to follow. Columbia.
- f SHOPGIRL'S EVIDENCE—(Floyd Gibbons "Your True Adventure Series")—How a shopgirl becomes innocently involved in the stealing of a coat. Vitaphone.
- f THANKS FOR THE MEMORY (Bouncing Ball Cartoon)—Bert Block and his orchestra playing the well known song "Thanks for the Memory." Paramount.
- fj WESTERN WELCOME, A—The cowboys stage a good old fashioned welcome to scare the new owner of their ranch. Some nice cowboy singing. RKO Radio.

## INFORMATIONALS

- f FACE BEHIND THE MASK, THE (Historical Mystery)—Who was the man in the iron mask whom Louis XIV sent to die in prison? Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj BOY WHO SAVED A NATION, THE (Strange As It Seems)—The story of Lafayette. Columbia.
- f CAPTAIN KIDD'S TREASURE (Historical Mystery)—Was Captain Kidd really a pirate? This legend contrasted with what may have been the facts. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f COPS AND ROBBERS (Grantland Rice Sportlight)—Catching bears and mountain lions in the west. Paramount.
- f CROSSROADS OF THE ORIENT (E. M. Newman Travelogue)—Visiting Singapore. Technicolor. Vita.
- f EL SALVADOR (Around the World in Color)—Good views of San Salvador and environs. Columbia.
- f FASCINATION ADVENTURE (Grantland Rice Sportlight)—Seeking adventure in the waterways of Florida. Paramount.
- fj GENOM SVENSKA BYGDER—Through Swedish Countryside. Attractive scenic showing the beauties of Sweden. Scandinavian Talking Pictures.
- f GLIMPSES OF AUSTRIA (Fitzpatrick Traveltalk)—Traveltalk in color before Austria was absorbed by Germany. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f GLIMPSES OF NEW BRUNSWICK (Fitzpatrick Traveltalk)—Interesting traveltalk in color. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f GOING PLACES WITH LOWELL THOMAS NO 46—Danbury (Conn.) where hats are manufactured; Crater Lake in Oregon. Universal.
- f GOING PLACES WITH LOWELL THOMAS NO. 47—How spun glass is made and used; pearls from oysters. Universal.
- f GOING PLACES WITH LOWELL THOMAS NO. 48—Haiti; Rockefeller Center; Mongolia. Universal.
- f GOING PLACES WITH LOWELL THOMAS NO. 50—Holland—its people and customs. Universal.
- fj IN THE SWIM (Sportscope)—Water Sports; some excellent diving by the fair sex. RKO Radio.
- f \*JUNGLE GLIMPSES—A beautiful color scenic of the South American jungle, along the Amazon River. Paramount.
- f LA SAVATE—A curious and amusing form of boxing in vogue in France, in which the feet are used as much as the fists. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f \*MARCH OF TIME NO. 8, THE (4th Series)—Brain Trust Island—The rejuvenation of Key West by Administrator Stone; Arms and the League—Showing what has happened to the League of Nations in the years since it was started. RKO Radio.
- f \*MIRACLE MONEY (Crime Doesn't Pay Series)—Exposing a cancer cure racket. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f NATURAL WONDERS OF THE WEST (Fitzpatrick Traveltalk)—About what used to be called the Bad Lands. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj NETS HISTORIA—History of the News—Very informative showing of the making of a newspaper. Scandinavian Talking Pictures.
- f PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 8—Palm Beach bathing costumes—night workers in New York City; a beauty salon for dogs. Paramount.
- f PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 9—"Can they take it"—machines which check quality and endurance in merchandise; "Seeing is believing"—tame carp who drink milk out of a nursing bottle; "Alpine aqueducts"—flumes in the Alps. Paramount.
- fj PATHE PARADE NO. 4—Air college at Randolph Field, where the future aces are taught everything connected with flying. RKO Radio.
- f PATHE PARADE NO. 5—Ventriloquism; a workout of the American ballet; how the authors of song hits are protected. RKO Radio.
- f PENNY'S PARTY (Pete Smith Specialty)—Prudence Penny Tells how a woman with a job can prepare a quick, inexpensive and attractive dinner. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f POPULAR SCIENCE NO. 4—Large frost guns to protect citrate fruits from cold; a neat gadget for those who spend a lot of time in bed; making skis equipped with gadgets; air stations of the Coastguard. Paramount.
- fj ROMANCE OF LOUISIANA—The story of the Louisiana Purchase done in technicolor. Recommended for schools. Vitaphone.
- f SHIP THAT DIED, THE—The strange case of the "Marie Celeste," a ship whose crew mysteriously disappeared in mid-ocean. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f SKY FISHING—Trout fishing in the high glacier lakes of the Northwest. Educational.
- f STRANGER THAN FICTION NO. 48—Shortest railroad in America; a strange house built of art objects collected all over the world; an animal related to the opossum but coming from Mexico; a mink farm and its youthful owner; the largest camera in America; Miss 3 year old who is becoming an athlete; a woman whose skin reacts in a remarkable way; an alley cat well trained. Universal.
- f STRANGER THAN FICTION NO. 49—A man with strong toes; rare ruffled back pigeons and their little mistress; a woman metal worker; the smallest church, which boasts of radio from which music and sermons are broadcast; a well tamed wild cat; a youthful feminine glider who demonstrates her glider. Universal.
- f STRANGER THAN FICTION NO. 50—Native duck decoys; a famous foot doctor who is also a painter; a woman who dresses fleas; hickory trees for skis; a dog and his feathered friends; a rooster who delivers the mail. Universal.
- f SWINGING MALLETS (Sportscope)—A thrilling game of polo with some very fine slow motion camera work. RKO Radio.
- f THREE ON A ROPE (Pete Smith Specialty)—Thrills of mountain climbing, with explanations. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f VITAPHONE PICTORIAL REVIEW NO. 7—Covers: teaching dogs tricks; expert pocket billiards; how a colored lithograph is printed. Vitaphone.
- f \*WHAT PRICE SAFETY (Crime Doesn't Pay Series)—Tracking down a racket preying on public buildings and putting over cheap materials. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f WHAT THE WORLD MAKES—Growing pineapples in Hawaii; arts and crafts of Kandyman; basket making in Morocco; elephants in Ceylon uprooting trees. Done in technicolor. Vitaphone.
- fj WINDWARD WAY (Pathe Sportscope)—Fine photography in Miami-Nassau yacht race. RKO Radio.



# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

Vol. XIII, No. 5



May, 1938



*Before the last big flight in "Test Pilot" (see page 10)*

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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

f BATTLE OF BROADWAY—Victor McLaglen, Brian Donlevy, Louise Hovick. Screen story by Norman Houston. Directed by George Marshall. A story of the American Legion convention in New York with the farcical attempts of two old buddies to save their boss's son from a chorus girl. Loud and funny in the style of the Flagg-Squirt series. 20th Century-Fox.

f BELOVED BRAT — Bonita Granville, Dolores Costello, Donald Briggs. Screen story by Jean Nugelesco. Directed by Arthur Lubin. A fiery-tempered little rich girl not understood by her parents, and how she learned not to get into tempestuous scraps. First National.

f CALL OF THE YUKON—Richard Arlen, Beverley Roberts, Lyle Talbot. Story "Swift Lightning" by James Oliver Curwood. Directed by B. Reeves Eason. An unusually picturesque story of the Alaskan snows, exceptionally well photographed, and an exciting flight from starvation. Several animals—three fine dogs and two amusing bear cubs among them—give novelty to the story. There is an incidental three-cornered romance. Republic.

f CANTOR'S SON, THE—Moishe Oysher, Florence Weiss. Screen story by Ilya Motyleff. Directed by Louis Freiman. A pleasant and interesting Yiddish picture (with English titles) simple in plot, about a young immigrant who makes a great success as a singer and goes back to Europe to get his childhood sweetheart. The music is particularly good, and the mixture of comedy and sentiment is characteristic and pleasing. Eron.

f DR. RHYTHM — Bing Crosby, Beatrice Lillie. Story "The Badge of Policeman O'Roon" by O'Henry. Directed by Frank Tuttle. An entertaining comedy with some nice music. Dr. Bing Crosby posing as a policeman is bodyguard for an heiress to keep her out of the clutches of a fortune hunter. Crosby is his usual pleasing self and plenty of comedy is supplied by Beatrice Lillie, Andy Devine and Laura Hope Crews. Paramount.

f FOUR MEN AND A PRAYER — Loretta Young, Richard Greene, David Niven, George Sanders. Based on novel by David Garth. Directed by John Ford. Romantic melodrama done in John Ford's colorful and exciting style—four brothers (English) out to clear their father's name after he had been dismissed from the army in disgrace due to a mysterious plot fomented by ammunition makers. Action ranges over many picturesque quarters of the globe, with many swell episodes. 20th Century-Fox.

f HERE'S FLASH CASEY — Eric Linden, Boots Mallory, Cully Richards. Story "Return Engagement" by George Harmon Cox. Directed by Lynn Shores. A brisk story of a young newspaper photographer, his adventures in getting a job and the odd racket he was finally instrumental in uncovering. Grand National.

f INVISIBLE ENEMY — Alan Marshall. Screen story by A. J. Cohen and R. T. Shannon. Directed by John H. Auer. Smooth and entertaining melodrama of the tracking down of a sinister man of great financial power plotting against the peace of Europe. Republic.

f \*MOONLIGHT SONATA — Paderewski, Charles Farrell, Marie Tempest. Screen story by Hans Raneau. Directed by Lothar Mendes. A leisurely and rather trite story of a young girl being cured of an infatuation for an adventurer. Paderewski's personality and piano playing give it importance and distinction, and make it a priceless record of a great artist and his music. British production. Students should find it extremely valuable. Malmar.

f OUTLAWS OF SONORA—The Three Mesquiteers. Screen story by Betty Burbridge. Directed by George Sherman. Stone Brooke has an outlaw double who makes a lot of trouble for him. Lively outdoor melodrama. Republic.

f RECKLESS LIVING—Robert Wilcox, Nan Grey. Directed by Frank McDonald. A race track romance with comedy supplied by Jimmy Savo. Unlucky at picking the right horses, the hero picks the right girl. Some pretty good shots of horses running. Universal.

(Continued on page 15)



# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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## The Birth of a Baby

THE decision of the Board of Regents to uphold the ban on *The Birth of a Baby* in New York State will be a disappointment to the many people who welcomed the coming of this film. The decision is another example of misplaced protection of public morals, sincerely meant but without justification. Before the National Board gave its approval to the picture it was shown before members of the General Committee and approved almost unanimously by them for public showing. Since this Committee includes educators, ministers, social service workers and doctors there can be no question of any lack of responsible consideration for the public behind the Board's affirmative decision. It was the Committee's opinion that the picture was a sincere and necessary contribution to public health, produced without ostentation and without desire to present a spectacle to the public. No possible similarity was observed between it and certain questionable pictures which masquerade under a "scientific" mask. There was strong feeling against its exhibition being confined to clinical courses and select audiences, since it was obvious that such limitation would destroy the whole purpose of the picture by permitting its message to be sent solely to those who needed it least. The argument has been made, however, that public showing of the picture might have an unbalancing and dangerous effect upon mentally unstable persons. The Board not only feels that there is nothing in *The Birth of a Baby* to justify such an attitude, but also that persons in so advanced a stage of mental unbalance are infinitely more likely to be affected by everyday scenes and occurrences outside the theater than they could possibly be by any such

sensible production as this. (This, of course, in addition to the fact that the motion pictures can hardly be regulated by the reactions of psychotics). On the other hand the picture is well calculated to act as an antidote to exaggerated fears of pregnancy and childbirth in the minds of normal but unenlightened persons. We would also draw attention to the fact that the American Committee on Maternal Welfare has laid down the strictest regulations in regard to exhibitor advertising and display.

Finally we would like to dispose of the argument that the picture is not "entertainment", and hence is unsuited to the function of the screen. It is quite childish to demand that any picture which does not fit precisely into an artificial entertainment category be declared ineligible for public showing. In the first place entertainment cannot be defined in such rigid, narrow terms, and in the second place it is for the public alone to decide whether they are willing to pay for being instructed on the screen. Sooner or later it will have to be recognized that the screen is free to be used for any honest purpose, and if a producer seeks to educate audiences by honestly and constructively presenting the simple truth about child-birth, the public is quite capable of standing on its own feet and deciding whether or not it is being decently entertained.

We would greatly welcome comments from our readers on such questions as these, and, since no Monthly Discussion topic has been assigned for May owing to the lateness of the season, we believe it would be valuable for all groups to discuss *The Birth of a Baby* and report their findings to the Editor.

# Motion Pictures as a Publication Interest

By MAURICE KANN

*An address delivered at the National Board Conference. Mr. Kann is editor-in-chief of "Box Office."*

WHEN Carole Lombard arrives at a party, signaling the recovery of Mrs. Donald Ogden Stewart, in a white ambulance with bell clanging and starched attendants on deck for local scenery, you could conclude that the revolution ought to get under way in Hollywood.

When a tired star thinks it is "different" to run a tennis match with tails and evening gowns the order of the afternoon, you might wonder what sort of land it is on the other side of the mountains. You might ask of it: "Who cares and what of it?"

There is this of it. Across the nation, under the Atlantic and through the air the word flashes by special correspondent and by press associations for incalculable millions to read and, perhaps, to wonder, but to read, nevertheless.

For Hollywood, which is, of course, synonymous in the public mind with motion pictures, is news and a very substantial segment of those who go to neighborhood and downtown theatres want to know, not something about Hollywood, but all about it. Therefore, it comes about as no accident but as the result of a public and a publication demand that today in California there are accredited 304 correspondents, representing a world-wide press whose job it is to ferret out the Lombards and the white ambulances, the tired stars and the formal tennis matches. That is all these men and women do and they do it to the tune of an estimated 100,000 words a day, including Sundays, and by telegraph and mail.

They also do it in terms of chitchat, in terms of pertinent facts about films in the making, in terms of appraisal of films that are completed. They frequently throw javelins, some of them pleasantly dulled and some of them unpleasantly sharp.

Not always, however, have motion pictures filled what is at once an enviable and an unenvied spot. When films were very young, they carried with them no publication support. Newspapers, at large, regard-

ed celluloid efforts as a novelty to give way in their dubious hold on the public when the next temporary attraction came along. Thirty-five years ago was the day of *The Great Train Robbery*, Hale's Tours and the nickelodeons. By 1909 there were 9,000 motion picture theatres in the United States and *Buffalo Bill* had been ground out as a three-reeler.

It was in 1912 that Mack Sennett formed his Keystone Company, Adolph Zukor, his Famous Players Film Co. and the number of theatres had mushroomed to 13,000. In the following year, Charlie Chaplin was on his way, *Quo Vadis* had been shipped in from a pre-Fascist Italy, Cecil B. DeMille had produced *The Squaw Man*. Nineteen fourteen saw Roxy and the Strand on Broadway, Mary Pickford drawing a handsome \$104,000 a year and Chaplin and Marie Dressler tickling the nation's funny-bone in *Tillie's Punctured Romance*.

But in 1915, something of greater import took place. This was the year in which David Wark Griffith presented *The Birth of a Nation* on Broadway. It was de luxe for those days. Top price, \$2. Full orchestra in the pit playing a complete original score. Critics who had been known to repose peacefully in their doldrums, began to pay attention. The public was ahead of them. Newspapers went lavish in their praise. Up and down the land under the guiding hand of J. J. McCarthy went road companies, each complete with sound and effects. Motion pictures were beginning to seep into the public consciousness and, by inevitably the same token, into the printed word as well. But while the lineage was mounting, not all of it was on the favorable side. In 1921 and 1922, there were the Arbuckle scandal and the Taylor murder. There was talk in wholesale of censorship. There was also talk of another kind. It culminated in the retirement of Will H. Hays from the Cabinet and in the formation of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America. A favorable press, but a press waiting to be shown, followed this move on the part of the producers.



The overall interest in films was constantly heightening. Better Films Councils and Parent-Teacher Associations and many other public and semi-public groups, including the National Board of Review, began more importantly to play their roles. Previews of pictures began to be permitted freely. Increasing newspaper space began to be devoted to the activities of clubwomen and other civic leaders who were evincing an interest in the advance, actual but also potential, of motion pictures.

In time, and as the march of meritorious productions paraded across the screen, audiences gained in steady volume. *The Covered Wagon*, *The Ten Commandments*, *The Thief of Bagdad*, *The Gold Rush*, *The Big Parade*, *What Price Glory*, *Seventh Heaven*—these were some of the outstanding silent films that left their impress and, deeper and deeper, etched in the public mind an approximation, if nothing further, of the possibilities inherent in this oft maligned and frequently abused art-entertainment medium.

The industry was growing, gaining recognition sometimes sullenly accorded publicly and in the public press, but gaining ground nevertheless. In 1922, the average weekly theatre attendance in this country was 40,000,000. By 1930, it had reached about 90,000,000. Today, authorities will settle at 85,000,000. But significant is the observation, perhaps, that as growth came so came increased advertising budgets, increased editorial and news attention, increased coverage. The publishers of America knew what they were about and what was about them.

Quickly now, there came the sound era. More fumbling. More mystery of the how, why and when of this new entanglement. A grave problem in seeing to it that films did not become static. An equally grave problem in off-color dialogue. How to keep Hollywood's bad boys in line? Censor boards began to kick up a fuss. The guardians of the printed word again were wearing their war regalia. The industry was in a bad way, by its own shortsightedness. In 1930 came the Production Code, designed to check transgressions in type of material, in good taste, in unsavory characterization at the source.

1933 and 1934 were periods marked by

considerable criticism. The Legion of Decency was organized and to counteract it was formed Production Code Administration, a re-vitalizing of the original code by sharpening teeth that were to claw at the moneybags through fines inflicted on Hays association producers violating the rules of the game. The reply to the assault launched by the Legion was clear enough in purpose. The industry said, "We'll say it with pictures" and made good.

But while the industry had its flushes and its chills, the condition of the patient more repeatedly than ever before in its life was being reported and frequently diagnosed by the press. A vast audience, sometimes curious, sometimes genuinely interested, was standing within, not on, the sidelines, kept informed by hundreds of newspapers and magazines of what was transpiring. Not a chance there for the industry to step out of circulation for as long as a solitary minute of the day.

That's quite a strain, this job of being everybody's business, of finding someone peering through your window every minute and hour of the day and night. But, taking it by and large, the institution of motion pictures is revealing its mettle substantially and so well that it no longer needs remain apologist for its general procedure.

The subject of this discussion is a very broad one. It permits roaming at large around the world into the publication field in its many ramifications. The intent has been to limit these remarks to America, and within that geographical boundary, primarily to newspaper and magazine publication. There is a story of its own to be told about the impress of motion pictures in universities, in medicine, in crime prevention, in journalism, in politics. All of it has a general bearing on this topic, of course, because it seems a peculiar characteristic of the film that, wherever it goes and no matter into what field it may venture or become involved, the printed word travels with it to report what it is doing, whether well or poorly.

It is no longer strange these days, therefore, to find motion pictures discussed in the columns of the *Atlantic Monthly*, and that, it might be observed, is something. The *Pictorial Review*, the *Ladies' Home*

Journal and Time, for example, have their regular motion picture sections. The Saturday Evening Post, Collier's, Liberty and Scribner's publish a great deal of material on films. A current edition of Liberty carries an article by Fulton Oursler explaining why he publishes so much on motion pictures. His answer is, the readers want it.

Someone with a statistical bent who may have been talking through his hat has estimated that more Hollywood dateline stories are published in the nation's press than any other with the exception of Washington. This might not hold up under a thoroughly accurate analysis. Certainly, however, it is true that Hollywood ranks well up front in any such composition as this.

Because this is so, because Hollywood and motion pictures are very much the nation's business as well as their own, because Hollywood and motion pictures are susceptible to more criticism, indiscriminately and discriminately applied than any other industry of comparable size and investment, they feel they have to take what they get on the printed page and like it.

But the institution is pretty husky now. It has a fine pair of lungs, although unde-

veloped, a stronger constitution and a life being lived with much less reproach. Its importance in the social fabric of the country, is definite, assured, significant. It has less and less to apologize for and, with always a proper display of humility to a job never completely done, ought to bring its convictions and its point of view more definitely into the clearing.

What happens in and to motion pictures, conclusively now these days is news and will continue to be so in increasing measure. What it does and how gratifyingly or otherwise it does it, is copy.

Stature does not necessarily come with age. Recognizing the frailties in any system or scheme, it seems reasonable to state that, where films are concerned, the reverse is true. Motion pictures are growing up. Not perhaps as rapidly as some, or all in this audience may desire, but growing up beyond doubt. With maturity must come an even greater respect from those within the industry toward their own industry, from those on the outside looking in and proving cooperative, from the press which reflects the world around us and what is happening in it.

## The Motion Picture Industry as a Scientific Interest

By SIDNEY K. WOLF

*Mr. Wolf, who is president of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers and of Acoustic Consultants, Inc., delivered this talk at the National Board of Review 1938 Conference.*

THE motion picture industry has been a very fertile field for the applied sciences of chemistry and physics. Through science the motion picture has become the most important form in dramatic literature, and science will eventually make the motion picture a more faithful mirror of nature than the stage, with the whole world for its audience.

With the advent of color—and I say advent advisedly—I believe that the black and white picture will be a strange sight in the theatre a few years hence. There remain to be realized two major scientific improvements: (1) Stereoscopic, or three-dimensional pictures, and (2) Stereophonic,

or three-dimensional or auditory perspective sound.

At the last meeting of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers, Mr. Wheelwright of the Land-Wheelwright Laboratories, demonstrated stereoscopic motion pictures in color by means of polarized light. The results were fascinating. However, polarized light, which is controlled light in a uniform direction, makes possible the separation of two images so that each eye sees an independent image. This system has two commercial handicaps: (1) it requires glasses or binoculars for viewing, and (2) it sacrifices considerable light.

At the same meeting a demonstration of stereophonic or auditory perspective sound was given by J. P. Maxfield, of the Bell Telephone Laboratories. Such sounds enable you to locate sound in its relative po-



sition in the picture, and there is no question but that stereophonic sound will materially enhance the art. The question that arises in the minds of some of the producers and exhibitors is: Will stereoscopic pictures or stereophonic sound, or both, revolutionize the industry as did the addition of sound to the silent picture industry? In my opinion, neither of these improvements, alone or together, will create more disturbances in the industry than did the introduction of color, and the law of diminishing returns will to a large extent control improvements in the art. While progress will be continuous, it will result in a healthy and undisturbing growth.

No scientific discussion of the motion picture would be complete without some mention of the influence that television might have upon it. Many in the industry have looked upon television as the Frankenstein monster that will eventually destroy their business. I believe, however, that the effect of television will be quite the contrary, as the motion picture art and industry has as much to offer television when it is ready for commercialization as the broadcasting or communication industries have to offer. Especially I believe the producer should embrace television as his own field, for unquestionably the majority of television programs will be prepared on film, and electrically and photographically transcribed for broadcasting. There is no more, and probably less danger of the broadcasting industry supplanting the motion picture industry than there was of the communication industry absorbing the motion picture when sound was added.

In addition to the scientific improvements yet to be commercialized, there are plenty of opportunities for the scientist and the engineer to improve the elements of the motion picture now in commercial use.

One element of the present commercial film which has been attacked recently as being in need of fundamental improvement is the film base. The present base is quite perishable. A significant illustration of this point is supplied by one of the reels of Lindbergh's famous flight; when it was taken out of storage it was found that the

film had disintegrated. If our vast motion picture library and archives are in imminent danger of perishing even in our life time, the industry and scientists should be stirred to concentrated action for the solution of this serious problem.

At the present time a number of engineers are working on metal and specially treated paper for film base. Some of their results look promising. The metal film would have the advantage of a long life and would also make it possible to print on each side of the film, as projection would have to be brought about by reflections *from* the film rather than by transmission *through* the film as is the procedure with cellulose films to-day.

The improvements in camera lenses have been remarkable. The technique of the cameraman has so improved that he now holds a more prominent position in the industry, technically as well as socially. The latter is manifest by the increasing number of actresses marrying their cameramen. We should also remember a fact well known in the profession—that a cameraman by his technique can enhance or detract from the photographic appearance of an actress by the angles of perspective that he employs in photographing her!

In the field of educational and industrial film there has been tremendous progress in the last few years. This field, however, is a good example of how essential the proper commercial treatment is to the practical realization of an art. By this I mean that, scientifically, the sub-standard, or 16-mm. field, is out of proportion to its commercial potentialities. This has been due, I believe, in no small measure to the lack of cooperation within the industry. Each producer of 16-mm. film seems to think his product the only product of merit, and the manufacturers take a similar attitude to their equipment. This has caused some hesitation on the part of the buying public; this, coupled with the fact that educational institutions are an autonomous, relatively non-competitive group possessing the inertia of a large body. These obstacles, however, like scientific obstacles, will eventually be over-

come. What the educational field needs is a minister of propaganda.

In the field of recording there has been one major scientific development that will be of value to the industry and, particularly, to the artist—namely, electro-magnetic recording. This is one of the three fundamental methods of recording and reproducing sound. (1) The mechanical method is used in the photographing and broadcasting field; (2) the photographing or film method, which is used in the motion picture field; and (3) electro-magnetic recording which has the unusual characteristic of being able immediately to reproduce and immediately

thereafter to erase, making it possible to use a record over and over again. The principle is based on the magnet re-arrangement of molecules in a steel wire.

Scientists and engineers have also been able to demonstrate their ability to cooperate internationally for the good of the industry. This was illustrated in a recent international standards meeting in Budapest where twenty-one nations met and succeeded in adopting a single standard in the motion picture industry for world use. This agreement will save the industry millions of dollars annually and stimulate international trade in the industry.

## Going to the Movies in Chile and the Argentine

By Elnora D. Ford

*Mrs. Ford a member of the Review Committee of the National Board of Review has been spending much of her time for the past two years in South America, where Mr. Ford has been in connection with his engineering interests, and from there she tells of her motion picture observations.*

WHEN we sailed for Santiago de Chile, my ideas of life in that city were very vague indeed. I expected to find so many differences and I was surprised to see people dressing the way we do, riding about in American made cars and eating breakfast foods packaged in the United States. To say nothing of the girls playing with Shirley Temple dolls and small boys very proud of their Mickey Mouse sweaters and their pocket knives with pictures of Popeye painted on them.

I knew, of course, that motion pictures made in Hollywood were sent to all parts of the world but had no idea that they would be so popular in Chile. One Sunday I counted the movie theaters advertised in a Santiago newspaper and there were exactly sixty-three! I believe it is safe to say that since cock-fighting has been frowned upon, "going to the cine" is the national sport. Everyone goes, from people high in national and diplomatic circles to the Araucanian indians of the lake region—the women with their shawls and long black braids and the men wearing the traditional poncho.

There is a strict government censorship of the movies and all the advertisements state whether children under fifteen years will be admitted. However, there are special programs for children Saturdays and Sundays so everybody is happy. The cost of a theater ticket varies from one to six pesos depending (as in the United States) on the type of theater, the location of the seat and whether it is a new picture or has been shown in the city before. (At the present rate of exchange a Chilean peso is worth about four cents in American money.) There are three separate showings each day—the matinee at three o'clock, vermouth at six-thirty, and the night performance at ten. As tea-time commences about five o'clock and the dinner hour is nine, people usually go to the movies either after tea or right after dinner. Lateness is no object, since in Latin American countries everyone stays up late.

A few pictures come to Chile from Europe and the Argentine but Hollywood productions are the most popular. Often their original titles have to be changed, as a literal translation would not always convey anything in Chile. *The Devil Is a Sissy*, I remember, was changed to *The Melting Pot of the Streets* and *The Country Doctor* to *Five Little Cradles*. I happened to see *Ceiling Zero* twice—once in New York and



again in Santiago—because I did not recognize it under the name of *Heroic Eagles*. However, it was such a grand film it was well worth seeing more than once. When *San Francisco* was shown in Chile it was called by the same name but the theater owners were afraid people might get the idea it was a story of the life of Saint Francis so they advertised it: *San Francisco* (The City of Sin) and it played to capacity houses. Earthquakes are rather frequent in Chile and when in the picture the earthquake began without warning people thought Santiago was experiencing another of its tremors and several in the audience jumped from their seats and started to run out of the theater.

It would be impossible, of course, to translate the English conversations into Spanish, word for word, so just enough is translated and printed at the bottom of the picture to put the idea across. As in the case of the titles, many of our expressions and “gags” are meaningless in Spanish and for that reason others are substituted. Because of this one often hears the audience laughing at different times. Occasionally pictures are being shown down south of the equator at the same time as in New York or Los Angeles but they are more apt to arrive two or three months after. It really makes no difference because I have always felt no matter how old a picture is, it is new until you’ve seen it anyway.

We flew from Santiago to Buenos Aires over the Andes, the route Clark Gable took when he completed his conquest of the Argentine in October 1935. I found the people still talking about his visit. Although the trip was supposed to be only for pleasure and he did not make any personal appearances in theaters, huge crowds greeted him wherever he went during the eight days he was here. People seemed to think nothing would be quite so nice as to be able to tear a chunk of clothing off his back to carry home as a souvenir. The day after he left a newspaper reported that because of the crowds it was necessary to have four policemen hustle him to his ship, one front and one back and one on each side. The story goes on to say: “Clark Gable was squeezed in be-

tween the quartette looking like a handsome malefactor being carried off to gaol. They were only trying to get him through the crowd to his rooms. The saving grace in this picture was the smile he wore”—a bit slipped, I thought.

Judging by the box office, Clark Gable is the most popular male actor and Kay Francis the most popular woman. Buenos Aires is known as the “Paris of the western world” and its women are famous for their lovely clothes. The popularity of Miss Francis is partly accounted for by the fact that she is rather a Latin type and a bit more mysterious than most others but principally because she wears clothes beautifully.

As in Chile, most of the pictures shown in the Argentine are made in Hollywood but quite a few are filmed in this country too. They are in Spanish and, compared to the North American product, are very crude, but they serve their purpose. They are made primarily for the people out in the cattle country who do not understand English and cannot read the Spanish translations.

A film usually stays at a Buenos Aires theater for only one week but, of course, it returns later at a lower price to other theatres. Occasionally a picture is held over for a second week but the record is held by *Cavalcade* which ran for six weeks. The top price in the finest theater is the equivalent of 90c in American money and the lowest priced seat in a little theater in an outlying district is about 6 c. The official closing time is 12:30. Children under 14 are not allowed in the movies at the night performances and at other times only when accompanied by adults.

In the United States we think a double feature program is pretty long but down here there are “double double” features. Recently I went to one that included *Captains Courageous*, *There Goes My Girl*, *Under the Red Robe* and an excellent picture in Spanish called *Allá en el Rancho Grande*. The theater was crowded—as a matter of fact, I had to stand at the back for over an hour before getting a seat. Most

(Continued on page 14)

# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS

## DEPARTMENT

*This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of Exceptional and Honorable*

*Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.*

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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## Test Pilot

*Screen play by Vincent Lawrence and Waldemar Young from a story by Frank Wead, directed by Victor Fleming, photographed by Ray June, montage effects by Slavko Vokrapich, musical score by Frank Waxman. Produced by Louis D. Lighton for Metro Goldwyn Mayer, distributed by M. G. M.*

### The cast

Jim .....	Clark Gable
Ann .....	Myrna Loy
Gunner .....	Spencer Tracy
Drake .....	Lionel Barrymore
General Ross .....	Samuel S. Hinds
Landlady .....	Marjorie Main
Joe .....	Ted Pearson
Mrs. Benson .....	Gloria Holden
Benson .....	Louis Jean Heydt
Sarah .....	Virginia Grey
Mable .....	Priscilla Lawson
Mrs. Barton .....	Claudia Coleman
Mr. Barton .....	Arthur Aylesworth

FOR quite a while the movie people were always getting John Monk Saunders to write the story when they wanted to make a picture about flying, particularly a war picture. Now Frank Wead appears to be their man. He was responsible for one of the best of them, *Ceiling Zero*, and he did whatever is meant by "original story" for *Test Pilot*, which surely must include the main plot and general conception of characters. From these two examples one would guess that he was more concerned with what flying does to fliers—what kind of men it makes of them—than in flying itself. What happens in the planes—the dangerous flights, the accidents and thrilling crashes—is all mere background, though a very special and conditioning one, for the nerves and egos that have been shaped and sharpened by the job of running planes. *Test Pilot*, though it has flying episodes to curdle the marrow

in your bones, centers fundamentally in the peculiar twists created in a love-and-friendship triangle by the fact that the people involved live under the perpetual threats of a specially hazardous branch of aviation.

The picture is quite obviously tailor-made to fit and set off the styles and personalities of its principal players, something in which they can move comfortably at their natural gaits without stretching themselves beyond their capacities. The tailors—the dialogue writers, for example—tried their hands at additional trimming in the way of flossy conversation, which produces the unfortunate effect of ribbons and tassels on a pair of overalls, but generally they did a good job, and Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy and Myrna Loy—aye, and Lionel Barrymore—can be themselves, doing just what they have done many a time before, and yet seem convincingly the men and girl of this particular fable.

*Ceiling Zero* took fliers who had been through the old War and showed them trying to adapt themselves to commercial flying. It had been a play, originally, and the camera had to do some agile skipping around to dispel as well as it could the effect of showing only something within the three walls of a stage performance, but it had enough bite in its people and their talk (along with James Cagney and Pat O'Brien) to be remembered vividly as an important movie about a special breed of men. *Test Pilot* looks to the next War, with men engaged in putting planes designed for the army to tests that will prove them good fighting machines. Naturally the picture can't go in for any mechanical realism—



just what details of construction the perilous flights are intended to try out are military secrets that cannot be revealed, but a general impression of crucial importance in the work of these fliers can be created, and is. The flying in the picture is generalized and sketchy, but symbolic enough to the mind and vivid enough to the eye to be hair-raising and spine-curling, which makes a fine emotional and pictorial background against which to set the people whose lives exist only in relation to that background.

The central figure is one of those hard-boiled dare-devil guys the movies have made typical of heroic fliers, fatally attractive to women but very casual with them, his whole mysterious inner self wrapped up in his job in the air. We are led to believe that life lived in intimacy with him, loving him, spoiling him, is more exciting and satisfying for all its incidental miseries than any other life could be: there are such people, and if we can't believe he is one of them of course we don't believe in the friend and wife for whom existence was all bound up in him.

For *Test Pilot* is more than anything else a drama of love and friendship, often probing with extraordinary keenness into the nervous and psychological anatomy of those emotions, sometimes shying into a wordy bathos of cheap-fiction flappedoodle. There is some pseudo-poetic talk about a girl in blue in the sky—the Lorelei of the clouds with such a fatal allure for fliers—and again about the three roads to doom which lie ahead of anyone who loves a flier, which is pretty painfully fancy: even the authors must have realized there was something phoney about such talk, for they make the Spencer Tracy character kid it, casually but cuttingly.

But as a basis for these explorations into the workings of love, so daring and uncharted for the movies that no deviations from strict honesty would have been a miracle, are three very solid and real characters, essentially American and 1938, behaving for the most part not in the usual superficial boy-meets-girl fashion, but as such people, with their natures and backgrounds, would naturally behave in their surroundings of desperate speed and tension.

Surely such a quick courtship as that of Jim and Ann—he landing in a Kansas field, coming out of the sky to a girl humorously conscious of her own romanticism in being swept away by such an arrival—has rarely been managed with such light and deft convincingness. The gradual process of their adjustment to each other, beginning with the episode, even more revealing than amusing, of the purchase of the night-gown for their wedding night, is pictured with a truthfulness that is startling when one stops to think of the implications involved—all the incidents, some of them small but all of them cumulative, in which sudden instants of insight vanquish instinctive selfishness and slowly build up the mutual understanding and tolerance that has to go with love to keep it enduring. And even more amazing, in a movie designed for mass appeal and therefore presumably jittery about departing from formula, is the character and behavior of Jim's friend, Gunner, who accepts Jim's wife without jealousy and—most amazing of all—does not fall in love with her in the conventional triangle fashion but becomes her friend, too, outwardly—deliberately, one guesses—rather dumb, but always understanding and unobtrusively helpful. Even he has his bit of human imperfection in the profoundly truthful moment, after the long, grueling strain of Jim's series of more and more dangerous flights, when he breaks, and knocks the man down just before their last flight, and forgets so significantly the ritual of sticking his chewing-gum on the plane.

Perhaps the most important thing about *Test Pilot* is that it is one of the examples of how the people of Hollywood, so berated for pretentious and expensive triviality, often, within the necessarily imposed framework of pleasing the millions, manage to work in strains of truth that might be expected to please only the few. The picture is so noisy with sure-fire elements—box-office cast, violent excitement, glycerine tears and such—that it may be hard to keep the ear attuned to the quieter, authentically human, things in it. But they are there, giving the picture an appeal on quite a different level from that of mere melodramatic thrill. *Rated Honorable Mention.* J.S.H.



*A new arrival on the troopship*

## Troopship

*Story by Wolfgang Wilhelm with dialogue by Ian Hay, directed by Tim Whelan, photographed by James Wong Howe and Hans Schneeberger, music score by Richard Addinsell. Produced by Alexander Korda under the supervision of Erich Pommer, distributed by United Artists.*

### *The cast*

Colonel Blair .....	Leslie Banks
Mrs. Blair .....	Flora Robson
Captain Reed .....	Sebastian Shaw
Ann Harrison .....	Patricia Hilliard
Roddy Hammond .....	Anthony Bushell
Elsie Wainwright .....	Rene Ray
Jim Carter .....	Robert Newton
Lady Joan .....	Leonora Corbett
Dr. Pearson .....	J. H. Roberts
Major Swayle .....	Eliot Makeham
Mrs. Swayle .....	Martita Hunt
Smith .....	Robert Cochran
Sergeant Brough .....	Edward Lexy
Mrs. Brough .....	Maire O'Neill
Sergeant-major Billings .....	Wally Patch
Mrs. Billings .....	Margaret Moffatt
Lily Toft .....	Gertrude Musgrove
Corporal Edrich .....	Billy Shine
Bulger .....	Alf Godard
Mrs. Bulger .....	Edie Martin
Withers .....	Edmund Willard

TWO widely different talents collaborated in the production of this extremely British film, that of Tim Whelan, who has been directing pictures for years without ever turning out anything that anyone remembers, and that of Erich Pommer, under whose supervision some of the best German directors made some of their most memorable pictures, and who, in spite of his immeasurable contribution to the greatness of German films, eventually lost the favor of the Hitler regime and became an exile.

*Troopship* follows the excellent but oft-used formula of segregating a large group of people of various types and classes and showing how they act when something happens that affects every one of them. In this instance it is a British regiment on its way back to England after five years' service in India. Nearly a score of differing individuals are picked out of the crowd for our observation, people to whom getting home



again after such a long absence is in one way or another of vital importance. Two days from Southampton orders come from the War Office that the whole regiment is to return to the East after only six hours in port.

Such a set-up as this can turn out to be quite truthfully what they call a "cross section" of life. On the other hand it contains more than ordinary pitfalls for the unskillful: if the tapestried "section" doesn't live it is as bad as a beginner's attempt at fancy knitting, spoiled by dropped stitches and loose threads.

The British troopship carries not only soldiers but their families, and the ultimate lesson we are to learn from them (and there is no escaping that we are to learn a lesson, for you can sniff it simmering from the beginning and you feel and fear it will boil up into a universal "Rule Britannia" before the end) is that the Colonel and his lady, and everybody else down—quite a lot down—to Judy O'Grady and husband and offspring, are staunchly for King and Empire under their skins.

There are quite a lot of people to get acquainted with, all with special qualities and problems. There is the Colonel himself, gruffish and loyal and fatherly to his men, with a fine wife who is hiding from her husband the fact that when she gets home she must go through an operation that may end her life. A major too, also an excellent officer but with a wife who gossips and makes trouble. At the other end of the social scale, down in the bowels of the ship, are the Judy O'Gradies quarreling over their wash-tubs, and the Tommies whose wives or sweethearts are at home, and the man who is glad he has no wife, and the man who is always grouching, bolsheviking constantly about their being a lot of "ruddy sheep." In between, presented with careful gradations, are a sergeant who creates a lot of excitement by becoming a father just before the ship docks, and a corporal yearning for a sweetheart he fears may not have remained true to him. Also a nurse, untypically pretty, who is manifestly a lady, and a private mysteriously calling himself Smith, just as manifestly a gentleman, the gentility of both manifesting itself in the pal-like manner

toward them of a handsome Captain who joins the ship at Gibraltar, on his way to a berth in the War Office and a lady fiancée, whom he forgets sufficiently to fall in love with the nurse.

All these separate bits of character and drama have to be set in motion and developed to the point where they can be climactically resolved in the brief stop of the ship at Southampton before its sails away again. And there the corporal rescues his girl from unfaithfulness just in the nick of time, and the Captain finds his fiancée is as anxious, in a lady-like way, to be rid of him as he of her, and he can forego his soft berth in the War office, make an officer's wife of the nurse, and go back with the ship. There the bolshevik Tommy finds he is not just a ruddy sheep at all, but a loyal soldier of the King, the Colonel leaves his wife, maybe never to see her again, and the boastful bachelor—a comic note to end on, lest the last sight of the Colonel's wife leave us too depressed—is discovered to have a scarecrow old wife with an umbrella, whose unexpected appearance out of her hiding place in a sea-chest makes him fall in a slapstick faint.

All of this has the stuff of a fine movie in it, and the genius of Erich Pommer presides over it effectively enough to leave us finally with the feeling that we have actually seen a British regiment hungry for home and turned back from home at the last minute. The arrival of the ship, with the crowd at the dock, is a superb management of individuals in a mass of general movement, and the whole intricate tangle of personal stories submerged in a general situation is managed with a master's knowledge of what a good movie is. But Pommer, not being English, had to depend on his director for the handling of individual characters, and Mr. Whelan, who in a film called *Action for Slander* showed himself sufficiently adept at presenting the generally accepted aspects of high society people, can go no further with the lower classes than sketch in the traits and appearances that have been done to death in comic music-hall acts. So there is the surprising result of a lot of meagrely depicted individual characters somehow managing to sum up into an impressive mass picture. One has to put aside any personal

prejudices about war and empire and the British social hierarchy and be prepared to take a good stiff dose of England's special brand of sentimentality, but if that isn't too hard to do this film has a lot to offer.

*Rated Honorable Mention.*

J.S.H.

## Screeno and Sacha Guitry

**P**EARLS OF THE CROWN deserves attention chiefly because of the effects it manages to put across despite the many hurdles that cover every step of the way. In the first place it is spoken in three languages, is set in three countries—England, France and Italy—not counting a doubtful excursion to Abyssinia, is spread over five centuries and is so episodic that you almost forget to worry about it. It is first and foremost a whim of Sacha Guitry's—if a whim can still be called a whim after two hours screeno—and into it Mr. Guitry has thrown just about every historical character since Henry VIII and made them all come out looking exactly like little Guitrys. They are supposed to hang together on the history of seven pearls, some now belonging to the crown of England, every one of which is tracked down to the bitter end in a succession of countless episodes terminating on a voyage to New York aboard the *Normandie*. No audience can be expected to remain tense and expectant throughout the seven separate hunts, the side-spins to the main theme and the endless procession of monarchs, princesses, daring young men and national entanglements, but few people will leave the theater without remembrance of a number of striking sequences which crop up with some frequency to compensate for the sprawling length of the whole picture. In short the picture must not be seen with too serious an eye as to what should constitute a well-constructed movie: it makes no pretenses to being anything but an outrageous transgression of cinematic fair-play. And in following his own humor Mr. Guitry has splashed in essences out of every bottle within reach; there is laughter, love, absurdity, excitement and suave cynicism, and now and then deliberate burlesque—such as the parody of the dining-room scene in *Henry VIII*. (watch Henry eat that chicken!), and

the wooing of the Ethiopian queen whose make-up is just bad enough to let you recognize an essentially French skin underneath it.

Incidentally, *Pearls of the Crown* can be highly recommended for students of French and Italian. Whatever its lackings as a movie there are some admirable speech qualities to it and since the movement is graceful and deliberate the dialogue follows a similar vein and is delivered with great clarity and perfection. And for all its little games it is probable that much of the tangle of Europe's kings, queens and successions emerge more clearly than they ever did from the history book. N.D.

(Continued from page 9)

of the people stayed for the whole program although it lasted for more than six hours.

There are over 200 moving picture theaters in Buenos Aires and some of them are really splendid. The largest has a seating capacity of 3,600 and the next largest seats 2,500. In one way I like them better than the theaters at home. There is about twice as much space between the rows of seats (a city ordinance) and people can go to their places without stepping all over their neighbors' feet. The candy sellers walk back and forth between the rows during the intermissions and they do not seem to have any trouble although, of course, men the size of Santa Claus are not hired. One custom that seemed very unusual to me at first is that when the usher takes people to their seats and hands them their programs they are expected to tip him.

There are several motion picture magazines published here. They are written in Spanish and have a wide circulation. People have a keen interest not only in the pictures but in the stories connected with the making of the pictures and in the players themselves. To be convinced of that one has only to recall the receptions given Clark Gable, Lupe Velez and Ramon Navarro on their visits to Buenos Aires. If Bette Davis and Gary Cooper ever decide to come to the Argentine they are assured of a very warm welcome too. Last November a Californian wine merchant who bears a certain



likeness to Gary Cooper was making a trip down the west coast of South America en route to Buenos Aires. He was accompanied by his attractive blonde wife who happened to resemble Bette Davis slightly. Reports were issued from several cities along the way telling of their trip and saying that the couple was not making any personal appearances in theaters but were traveling incognito with friends. Naturally, when they were questioned they denied they were the famous film stars, which made the reporters all the more convinced that the rumors were correct. The day their train arrived from Chile a large crowd was at the station to meet them. When the people saw that they were really in earnest about not being the Hollywood stars they decided they didn't look so much like Bette Davis and Gary Cooper after all.

One evening sometime ago when we went to the movies former King Alfonso of Spain was shown in the newsreels. It seems he had attended the wedding of a relative. When his picture was shown on the screen there was a great deal of cheering and yelling and clapping in the theater. I was surprised to learn he had so many loyal sympathizers in the Argentine but found out later that when he abdicated many of the rich people left Spain too and came here to live.

Speaking of newsreels, last week we saw a picture of the New York harbor with the Statue of Liberty and, in the background, the stately skyscrapers. It brought back memories of home—and a longing for the sound of the expresses as they thunder through the local subway stations and a desire for another taste of the chocolate malted milks made at my favorite drug store on Seventh Avenue. And who is this Charlie McCarthy whose name I've seen mentioned in American magazines — and what is "The Big Apple" like? It is grand traveling about but it will be even nicer to be home again! •

(Continued from page 2)

- f RETURN OF THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL, THE—Barry K. Barnes, Sophie Stewart. Screen story by Baroness Orczy. Directed by Hans Schwartz. An adventure,

costume story of the French Revolution, and how a plot to capture the Englishman who was befriending French aristocrats ended in the downfall of Robespierre. True to the usual tradition of such pictures. British production. United Artists.

- f SAILING ALONG—Jessie Matthews, Barry Mackay, Jack Whiting, Roland Young. Screen story by Selwyn Jepson. Directed by Sonnie Hale. A pleasant musical comedy of a girl who gives up a stage career for love. Particularly nice dancing. English production. Gaumont British.

- f SAINT IN NEW YORK, THE—Louis Hayward, Kay Sutton. Novel by Leslie Charteris. Directed by Ben Holmes. The globe-trotting man of mystery known as the Saint cleans up a dangerous gang in New York, with some craft and considerable violence. Rattling good melodrama. RKO Radio.

- fj SOL OVER SVERIGE (Sun Over Sweden)—Greta Ericson-Hannes, Inga-Bodil Vetterlund, Nils Lundell. Screen story by Theodor Berthels. Directed by Arne Bornebusch. A chauffeur, two girls, and two young men start off on their respective holidays and meet with one another and romance before very long. A simple story is used as a good excuse for showing the Swedish countryside at its best with the accompaniment of pleasant comedy, light music and attractive photography. Scandinavian Talking Pictures, Inc.

- f STOLEN HEAVEN—Olympe Bradna, Gene Raymond, Lewis Stone. Story and direction by Andrew L. Stone. A story of jewel thieves who cover their tracks by posing as professional musicians, which gets sentimental toward the end when the two leaders of the gang prefer prison to failing an old pianist. The music is excellent. Paramount.

- f \*TEST PILOT—See Exceptional Photoplays Dept. Page 10.

- f THERE'S ALWAYS A WOMAN — Joan Blondell, Melvyn Douglas. Screen story by Wilson Collison. Directed by Alexander Hall. A jazzed-up mystery story, in which the detective's wife gives him a lot of unwanted assistance. A fine mixture of melodrama and fun, with plenty of real laughs. Columbia.

- fj TRIP TO PARIS, A—The Jones Family—Screen story by Robert Ellis and Helen Logan. Directed by Mal St. Clair. An amusing adventure of this very human family, in which Jack almost gets mixed up with spies. 20th Century-Fox.

- f \*TROOPSHIP—See Exceptional Photoplays Dept. page 12.

(Continued on page 19)

## Motion Picture Activities Reported at the Board Conference

ONE session of the Board's Annual Conference was given to a reporting of organization motion picture activities, by the delegates in attendance from various groups. From month to month these have been printed in our Magazine and here we present several more.

**Mrs. Jesse M. Bader,  
Chairman Women's Committee, National  
Conference of Jews and Christians,  
Motion Picture Committee Federated  
Church Women**

LAST October and November I made a trip to the West Coast. Stopping at twenty-seven cities along the way, speaking for the National Conference of Jews and Christians, I was often invited to Better Films Councils for luncheons and to speak to them and see them in action. It was quite interesting for me to visit these different groups and find out the many things and remarkable work they were doing.

One thing which impressed me greatly was the number of men on the councils. It is too bad to have only women in this motion picture work, as it leads to a danger of getting a feminine interpretation of what should be seen. And there is the danger too of an older interpretation, so I was glad to learn that a great many of these councils have young people, as well as men among their number. Also I was interested in seeing the high type of people who were doing this work. People in educational and religious activities, and club women, and occasionally there would be a cross-section of the total community, bringing the ideal of the worker into the council.

The church today is interested in the motion picture, as it has always been. In 1915 I made a trip to Hollywood and saw pictures being made. I went to Hollywood again in 1937, and the great difference and great advance in these twenty-two years is

quite amazing. Just following the 1915 trip I served on the censorship bureau of a mid-West town and learned how definitely harmful censorship is. Since then I have been very much against censorship and very much for selection. That is the thing, selection—not censorship, that the churches are trying to advance. We are trying to help mothers to see that they should not park their children at the theatres, that the responsibility is not altogether on the theatre, but is chiefly on the mother. We are trying to help young people in our classes to have an appreciation of the motion picture, of the story, of the mechanics, of the music and other values.

We are also trying to help to get an audience for good pictures. I was quite surprised when I heard Cecil DeMille say the other day that the pictures that paid the best at the box office, were *Ben Hur* and the *Ten Commandments*. I thought that was quite fine. This was because, I suppose, they reached a great group of people who perhaps have not always been picture conscious.

So, I think reviewing groups and council groups are making people picture conscious. The church today has about thirty million people—Catholic, Protestant and Jewish—attending through the week. The schools have about twenty-nine million pupils. There are in this country more pupils in school than all the rest of the world put together. But there are in the motion pictures each week from seventy to eighty millions. Here is a great opportunity to set a pattern of life.

We realize that that is not all that the motion picture is for. The motion picture in the theatre is purely for entertainment, but along with that comes education, which is quite necessary. Many people are going to the motion picture to see what to do with life situations. We are doing a fine thing in these films councils, as we are trying to make people who should appreciate good pictures respond to them.



**Mrs. James F. Looram,  
Chairman Motion Picture Department  
International Federation of Catholic  
Alumnae, N. Y.**

SOME of you, apart from a few of the newer members, may know that our Federation activity in motion pictures goes back sixteen years to 1922, when a few public-spirited groups and other groups interested in educational agencies decided that they would like to be in a position to issue a list of films classified according to their entertainment value.

Since 1922 our organization has been established in each state. Each state chairman has under her a chairman in every important city. That chairman publicizes the list of endorsed films, also broadcasts over a national hook-up in some places and over local stations in others. We have twenty-five radio stations throughout the country, broadcasting a talk which is co-edited by one of our reviewers, and the chairman of our department. We have a West Coast Committee composed of forty members who pre-view the films in the projection rooms as we do here in the East. Their ballots are sent air-mail to our office in New York and from the combined opinion of our West Coast and East Coast reviewers our list is issued, during the last four years under the auspices of the Legion of Decency.

However, outside of publishing a list of films classified according to their moral values, and our radio broadcasts, we have our school work. In all of the States our chairmen contact various academies and colleges, interest the sisters and instructors in the very worthwhile productions of the screen, and encourage by their support of those films, the production of more of that type.

The I. F. C. A., in all of its years of activity in motion picture fare, has maintained that the screen should not be used as the tool or as the soap box for any particular "ism." We feel that while we do not receive a great deal of education in many of our films, the primary part the film must play in the life of America, of course, is entertainment, wholesome entertainment, artistic entertainment. It does

not necessarily have to educate. After hearing Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler's talk at a luncheon recently, I feel quite convinced the educators are going to work rather closely with the industry in order to have films that will be beyond reproach as far as their educational values are concerned.

We feel, that producers in Hollywood, who do not set themselves up as educators, but who through their research departments do such excellent work in authenticating background, particularly in the historical films, have really done a magnificent job. And we hope and feel most optimistically that the future will supply us with many films of a fine educational type. At present we have films, like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, which reach the artistic heights of motion picture production and yet are not educational films. So we hope now that all the schools throughout the country will encourage the growth of motion picture appreciation classes, and so assist in the making of a screen that will be a real credit to this country.

\* \* \* \*

**Mrs. Piercy Chestney,  
President, Macon (Ga.) Better  
Films Committee**

ON Wednesday, the 29th of August, 1923, our Better Films Committee was organized and on the following Saturday we had our first children's matinee. We continued those matinees for twelve years, until we found the pictures were so good that parents could take their children on Friday evening. Consequently, they did not want them to go back on Saturday, so the crowds dwindled to such an extent that it did not warrant our carrying on unless we paid the expenses ourselves. So, after twelve years we discontinued that type of matinee, but not our occasional matinees.

In 1925 our Mothers' Day Matinees were started, showing on the Monday following Mothers' Day. We have continued these. We opened one theatre and that overflowed, and so we have gone on until now we have four theatres packed with people. We give prizes of flowers to the oldest mother, the youngest mother, and the mother with the

largest number of children. We take pictures of them and have front page stories.

When we were having our Saturday morning matinees, we always had a special one for Thanksgiving. The admission was oranges or some other sort of fruit, or canned goods. This idea worked well, although too many of the oranges were used by the children for playing ball and were not much good by the time the matinee began. But we took them just the same. Then, we had one on the first Saturday in December when toys were the admission. The Women's Club wanted to do that two years ago, so we turned it over to them, because we thought this would interest another three or four hundred people. This year they conceived the idea of having a matinee at the negro theatre, and all the little negro children came in with their toys. The toys these children brought were very much nicer than those brought by the white children. They were fixed over by the firemen and there were plenty for all the stockings. Another matinee at which we always have crowds is the Christmas Eve matinee for the under-privileged children. The producers, of course, lend the films and the staffs of all the theatres lend their services. We distribute the tickets through the principals of the schools, because they are the ones who can best do it to ensure against over-lapping. We had four thousand children at each one of the theatres this past year. We always have policemen and firemen there to take care of them.

Another activity started some years ago by a group of girls, was motion picture appreciation study. These girls asked the manager of the theatre if he could revive for them the finer pictures. They started with *Quality Street*, and since then have shown such pictures as *Cavalcade*, *Death Takes a Holiday*, *Peter Pan*, *Bluebeard*, *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, and all the finer pictures. This activity of theirs is not a money-making proposition at all. They have to guarantee a certain number of people. If they have over that number they share in the profits. They got \$6.23 as their share the first morning, and gave it to the principal of the school to put aside

against the day when there would be a deficit and they would have to meet it.

There was another new youth activity started this year. The boys' high school has a play at the beginning and the close of the year. They have now become so interested in pictures they have formed a club that meets once a week at night for the study of motion picture appreciation. Through their plays, they have given \$5,000 worth of equipment to the schools and are now putting Venetian blinds in the auditorium so they can have pictures there. After that, we are going to put their machines in condition and start them off with pictures.

A new project has just arisen in Macon. The better class of negro men and women of the community have organized a Civic Club. Before I left home they asked me to give them some suggestions for activities. I suggested that they try a children's matinee at the negro theatre, because the manager of that theatre on several occasions had asked us what we could do to help him keep the rowdies out on Saturday mornings. We did help with that and are going to help with the matinee programs.

I should like to say that our committee originated the thematic programs for children's matinees. The next year it was adopted by the Fox West Coast Theatres who gave us credit for having originated the idea on all of the programs they sent out.

The Monday following the organization of the Better Films Committee, we started reviewing pictures. We immediately supplied the library with information. That was another thing our committee originated. The Los Angeles Library was the first to pick it up. It has now gone all over the country. The people, of course, call up to find out the picture information.

We have subscribed to a number of magazines that we have thought were worth while. We also immediately started a speakers' bureau, which is still very active. We send speakers not only through the organizations in the city, but throughout the State. The speakers' bureau has a very extensive file of articles in connection with every phase of motion pictures, that is used



by the colleges, both faculty and students, and other individuals in the preparation of many papers of various sorts presented before clubs.

We are now in our eighth year of broadcasting. I compile the broadcast—a fifteen-minute program—every week and a different member of the committee reads it. Of course we always give auditions for our broadcasting. We do not believe it would be fair to the station to send them just any speaker. We feel that the news must be of some value, because when the local station became a part of the Columbia system, out of fifteen or twenty sustaining local programs they dropped every one except the broadcast of the Better Films Committee. Also, we have been requested frequently to come and repeat the papers we have given over the radio in college chapels and various places of that kind.

I have tried to tell you briefly what our Committee has done and what we hope to do.

\* \* \* \*

**Mrs. L. R. Andrews**

**President, Jacksonville Motion Picture Council**

ONE outstanding thing we have done this year is to try to enlarge our membership of interested men and women. We have ten new members this year from the various organizations in the city. Our membership is not limited, in any way, to creed or fashion. We have our rabbi's wife, who is a very helpful member, and a Catholic priest. We have representatives from the Woman's Club and we have been able this year to increase the interest of the American Association of University Women. So, you see, our possibilities are varied and we hope to continue to grow.

Another outstanding thing we have done this past year was to organize a junior review committee, composed of ten high school members from two schools. These youngsters visit the pictures and pass their own criticism and then come back and report to the council. Sometimes their opinions make many of us older people feel very uninformed and inexperienced.

An activity we have continued is our children's matinees. These have been carried on for about twelve years with a prologue and a picture program arranged for the fifty-two weeks in the year. The prologue consists of a master of ceremonies leading the young people in community singing, followed by a junior program. As has been said here before, that has been most difficult to do, for our managers say it is so hard to get enough pictures that are suitable for children. However, we do our utmost and our Matinee Chairman has been untiring in her efforts through the years.

## A Timely Film for This Season

THIS year marks the twenty-first anniversary of Summer Play Schools in New York, organized by the Child Study Association. And this coming of age of an idea has been especially commemorated through the release of a film, made by the Play Schools Committee of the Association.

The picture shows the educational possibilities for children's activity in an all-day care program. The National Board was invited to bring together a representative audience to view the film and those present agreed it had value and interest for lay and professional groups everywhere. It could be used at a playground, if properly equipped for showings, or in arousing interest for play schools or supervised playgrounds.

It runs about 25 minutes and is available on 16 mm. There is no charge except transportation, and booking arrangements can be made with the Play Schools Committee, Child Study Association, 221 West 57th Street, New York City.

(Continued from page 15)

f UNDER WESTERN STARS—Roy Rogers. Screen story by Darrel and Stuart McGowan. Directed by Joe Kane. A cowboy runs for Congress—successfully—to fight for the ranchers against a selfish water power company. A new singing star in a good Western, against a realistic background of dust droughts. Republic.

## SHORT SUBJECTS

## CARTOONS AND COMEDIES

- fj **BIG CHIEF UGH-AMUGH-UGH** (Popeye Cartoon)—Popeye and Olive Oyl find themselves at an Indian camp where Olive Oyl falls for the big chief. Paramount.
- fj **CAPTAIN'S PUP, THE** (Captain and the Kids)—The Captain brings a pup home and has to win his wife over to keeping it. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj **FOX HUNT, THE** (Walt Disney Cartoon)—Donald and Goofy in clever and amusing nonsense. RKO Radio.
- fj **GOOD SCOUTS** (Walt Disney Cartoon)—Donald Duck's experiences as a Boy Scout leader. RKO Radio.
- fj **NELLIE THE SEWING MACHINE GIRL** (Oswald Cartoon)—The story of the poor girl, the villain who holds her in his power and the girl's sweetheart who comes to her rescue. Very well done. Universal.
- f **PENGUIN PARADE, THE** (Merrie Melodies)—A clever and amusing cartoon, with penguins entertaining in a polar nightclub. Vitaphone.
- fj **\*POLAR TRAPPERS** (Walt Disney Cartoon)—Donald Duck's adventures as a polar trapper. RKO Radio.
- f **PORKY'S HARE HUNT** (Looney Tunes)—A "mad" hare gives this cartoon some crazy twists that are funny. Vitaphone.
- f **ROBINSON CRUSOE'S BROADCAST** (Terrytoon Cartoon)—An Irish Robinson Crusoe tells of his adventures. Educational.

## MUSICALS, NOVELTIES AND SERIALS

- f **BILLY ROSE'S CASA MANANA REVUE**—High spots from some of Billy Rose's shows, numbers elaborately done in the old-time Follies-Vanities style. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f **COMMUNITY SING NO. 6**—Devoted to cowboy and western songs. Columbia.
- f **DEAR OLD DAD** (Floyd Gibbons "Your True Adventure" Series)—About an old man who disappeared and was found again. Vitaphone.
- fj **LONE RANGER, THE** (Serial) Nos. 6-12—Starring Lee Powell and Herman Brix. Screen story by Benny Shipman. Directed by William Markkey and John English. A serial of the pioneer days. All but one of a band of rangers are wiped out by the outlaws and the lone ranger swears vengeance. Plenty of excitement with Silver, the beautiful white horse, as a symbol of law and order. Republic.
- f **\*MUSIC MADE SIMPLE**—Robert Benchley does a brilliant take-off of the kind of radio commentator who supplies cultural information for symphony programs. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f **RUBINOFF AND HIS VIOLIN**—Pleasant music. Vitaphone.
- f **STRANGER THAN FICTION NO. 51** (Stranger Than Fiction Series)—Strange people and events; A woman with hair that touches the ground; a boat deserted in the desert; a man with many trades; a strange memorial; a miniature city; trained bull; strange writing. Universal.

## INFORMATIONALS

- fj **\*BEAUTIFUL BUDAPEST** (Fitzpatrick Travel-talk)—Showing the exterior beauties of Hungary's capital in color. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f **BIKE PARADE, THE** (Grantland Rice Sport-light)—The old bike days and the popularity of the bike today. Paramount.
- fj **BIT AND BRIDLE**—Horses and horse lovers in Aiken. RKO Radio.
- f **GOING PLACES WITH LOWELL THOMAS NO. 49**—How rubber can be made by man; catching seals off the coast of California for circuses. Universal.
- f **GOING PLACES WITH LOWELL THOMAS NO. 51**—Visiting the interesting City of New Brunswick and the quaint places along the St. Johns River. Universal.
- fj **KINGDOM FOR A HORSE** (Treasure Chest)—All kinds of horses, from racers and hunters to one who draws a junk-wagon. Educational.

- fj **\*LAND OF THE INCAS, THE** (Fitzpatrick Travel-talks)—A colorful interesting and instructive travelogue. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f **\*MARCH OF TIME NO. 9**—Dealing with the subject of crime prevention, showing the strides that have been made in the improvement of prisons and the aid given first offenders. The second part shows the conquest of Austria by Hitler and the Nazi Regime. A most interesting and timely number. RKO Radio.
- f **MODELING FOR MONEY** (Pete Smith Specialty)—Showing the training required of girls before they become expert and successful mannequins and advertising models. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f **PINEHURST** (Pathe Sportscope)—Champion golf players in the beautiful North Carolina resort. Joe Bolton as commentator. RKO Radio.
- f **TORADJA LAND** (Newman Travelogue)—About Celebes and Borneo. Vitaphone.
- fj **UNUSUAL HUNTING** (Special Sport Thrills)—Just what its title indicates—hunting for such things as falcons, alligators, wild pigs, etc. Columbia.
- f **UNUSUAL OCCUPATIONS NO. 5**—Making gold leaf; a traveling library; a woman chimney sweep; a man who writes books, makes the paper, prints the book and binds it; feeding insects in a museum; a dentist becomes an artist. Paramount.
- f **VITAPHONE PICTORIAL REVIEW NO. 8**—About writers of song hits, bowling, rubber bathing suits. Vitaphone.
- f **WIN, PLACE OR SHOW** (Grantland Rice Sport-light)—How race horses are trained and taken care of and how they win or lose money for the bettors. Paramount.
- fj **WINTERBLOT** (Midwinter in Lapland)—Striking, unusual travelogue showing fine snow-scenes and human and animal life against highly effective backgrounds. Scandinavian Talking Pictures, Inc.

## Selected Pictures Catalog

THE 1937-38 Annual Catalog of Selected Pictures listing 325 selected features and 331 selected short subjects is now available. It may seem somewhat late in the year to be announcing this annual compilation, which has usually been published in February, but because of the monthly Selected Pictures Guide appearing in the Magazine it was thought perhaps there was no need of the yearly listing. However, so many requests for it have been received that it is being published as usual, providing in convenient pamphlet form the selected pictures of the year. The price is 25c. This slip is for your convenience in ordering.

NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES  
70 Fifth Avenue - New York City

Enclosed find 25c for the Annual Catalog of Selected Pictures.

Name .....

Address .....

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# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

Vol. XIII, No. 6



June, 1938



*A happy moment in "Three Comrades" (see page 10)*

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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

fj \*ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD, THE—See Exceptional Photoplays Dept. page 13.

f AIR DEVILS—Larry, Blake, Dick Purcell. Original story by Harold Buckley. Directed by John Rawlins. An amusing story of two Marines and their part in a plan for developing a South Sea island as a naval aviation base. The flying is quite spectacular, the dialogue clever and the picture has plenty of action. Universal.

m \*BLOCKADE—United Artists. See Spain in the Movies. Exceptional Photoplay Dept. page 15.

f COCOANUT GROVE—Fred MacMurray, Harriet Hilliard. Story by Sy Barlett. Directed by Alfred Santell. A musical comedy-romance centering around the members of a band, who broke go to Hollywood for an audition and there make good. Paramount.

f \*CRIME SCHOOL—Humphrey Bogart, The "Dead End" Kids. Story by Crane Wilbur. Directed by Lewis Seiler. A vigorous exposure of the type of reform school that brutalize the boys through being more a prison than a school. A group of tough slum kids in danger of becoming criminals eventually get the kind of treatment that heads them toward being useful citizens. First National.

f GANGS OF NEW YORK—Charles Bickford, Ann Dvorak. Original story by Sam Fuller. Directed by James Cruze. An exciting gangster picture with Charles Bickford in a dual role. How a man who looked like "Rocky" the gangster fooled his gang, his girl and even his dog and caught the entire gang. A bit improbable but none the less a good yarn. Republic.

f GREAT JOHN ERICSSON, THE—Victor Seastrom, Marta Ekstrom. Scenario by Oscar Rydquist. Directed by Gustaf Edgren. The picture made to celebrate the Swedish-

American Tercentenary shows the life in America of the Swedish-born builder of the 'Monitor', who helped the North in the Civil War. It has exciting moments and a certain drama in the struggle between Ericsson and his neglected wife; acting and photography satisfactory. The idea behind this film is the best thing about it. Scandinavian Talking Pictures.

f GUN LAW—George O'Brien, Rita Oehmen. Original story by Oliver Drake. Directed by David Howard. A western story concerning a United States marshall who poses as a bad man in order to catch the leaders of a gang. RKO Radio.

f HOLD THAT KISS—Maureen O'Sullivan, Dennis O'Keefe, Mickey Rooney. Original story by Stanley Rauh. Directed by Edwin L. Marin. An amusing romantic comedy of two people who each gets the idea the other is rich, and the complications involved in the accidental deceptions that arise from the mistake. Much of the incidental domestic humor is very funny. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f HUNTED MEN—Lloyd Nolan, Mary Carlisle. Based on play by Albert Duffy and Marion Grant. Directed by Louis King. Having murdered a man who tried to cheat him a gangster hides in the home of respectable people, there trusted by the son and daughter who do not know the circumstances, his better nature asserts itself. Nolan is convincing in the part. Paramount.

f KENTUCKY MOONSHINE—Ritz Brothers, Tony Martin, Marjorie Weaver. Screen story by M. M. Musselman and Jack Lait, Jr. Directed by David Butler. The funniest of the Ritz Brothers' pictures. Unable to get a radio audition in New York, they go to Kentucky to get discovered as genuine hillbillies. Some hilarious episodes in it. 20th Century-Fox.

f KIDNAPPED—Warner Baxter, Freddie Bartholomew, Arleen Whelan. Based on novel by Robert Louis Stevenson. Directed by Alfred Werker. The adventures of Alan Breck, the leader of the Scottish clans and the small boy David Balfour. A lavish production and an interesting picture because of the story, but disappointing in many ways. 20th Century-Fox.

m NUMBERED WOMAN—Sally Blane, Mayo Methot, Lloyd Hughes. Story by John T. Neville. Directed by Karl Brown. The familiar plot of a girl enlisting as a spy on the men who are letting her brother go to prison for their crime, well and tensely directed, with sufficient humor to lighten the melodramatic excitement. Monogram.

fj OVERLAND EXPRESS, THE—Buck Jones. Screen story by Monroe Shaff. Directed by Drew Eberson. A vigorous though fictitious account of how the pony express was started. Along with the primitive complications of old-time silent Westerns it has a lot of the primitive virtues of a model old-time movie. Columbia.

(Continued on page 23)



JUN 23 1938

# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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## Summer Notes

WE have pleasure in informing our readers that during the months of June and July the National Board of Review will be heard over the air every Tuesday at 6.45 p.m. from New York City station WNYC. The program will be entitled Film Forum, and will include one main speaker and two or more additional speakers to put questions during the address. Two such programs have already been given: on May 31st, Dr. A. A. Brill set the ball rolling with a talk on "Censorship" and replied to questions by Miss Evelyn Gerstein. On June 7th New York City Commissioner of Licenses Paul Moss spoke on "The Problem of Control" and was questioned by Mrs. Lloyd A. Rider, Chairman Motion Picture Committee, United Parents Associations and officer of the Motion Picture Council for Brooklyn.

On June 21st, Mr. William P. Montague, Jr., News Editor of Paramount News, will speak on "The Making of a Newsreel" and on July 5th, Mr. Alfred Hitchcock, director

of *Secret Agent*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much* and *The Thirty-nine Steps*, will speak on "The Making of a Melodrama" with questions by Otis Ferguson, Film Editor of the New Republic.

Mr. Jack Mitchell, of the National Board's

Membership Committee and an active member of the Board for the last three years, is master of ceremonies on these programs. To him goes the thanks of the Board for having originated the plan and for his excellent work as announcer. He will be pleased if any comments or suggestions from listeners be sent to Film Forum c/o Station WNYC, New York City. We hope that our readers will cooperate in sending suggestions for future programs, etc. Tune in Tuesdays for details of forthcoming Forums.



ALFRED HITCHCOCK

*British film director who will appear on  
National Board radio broadcast*

WE wish to thank the many contributors who wrote in response to our statement on the Neely Bill. Such cooperation is most essential to concerted action against

faulty legislation, and while there is now no possibility of the Bill coming before Congress at present, its passage by the Senate is a sign that all interested groups must be prepared for further action against it at a later date.

WE would also like to thank the many groups and individuals who have joined us in our Monthly Discussions. Due to their interest and activity we have received a number of letters which have been most useful in judging the attitude of our readers towards the topics in question. These letters will be fully discussed in the next issue of the Magazine and will be quoted in a future Commentators Column.

THIS June number of the Magazine is the last issue until fall, and while most motion picture group activities are suspended during the summer motion picture attendance still goes on and thus the need to have information for the local Photoplay Guides and other informative services continues. We will, therefore, send the WEEKLY GUIDE TO SELECTED PICTURES to all Magazine subscribers requesting it during the period of the Magazine's suspension. If you do not request it we will understand you do not wish it, but if you do, send in the form on page 23, which can also be used for summer change of address notice.

FINALLY we would draw the attention of those interested in revivals and foreign films to the Summer Program announced by the Fifth Avenue Playhouse in New York City. Beginning July 1st and continuing through to the end of August the management will present the "First International Film Festival" which will consist of showings of forty four selected motion pictures from sixteen different countries: 11 from the United States, 6 from France, 5 from Russia and from England, 2 from Germany, Sweden, and Czechoslovakia, and 1 each from Denmark, Ireland, Hungary, Spain, Poland, Austria, Switzerland, Palestine and Mexico.

This is the first attempt to cover the best of the world's productions and we hope most sincerely that it will enjoy a tremendous suc-

cess. The list is an admirable one (though naturally there will be room for dispute amongst fans) and we are pleased to note that all but ten of the chosen films were selected for exceptional merit by the Exceptional Photoplays Committee of the National Board of Review. Those interested in this novel program (and there are certainly very many) should write to Helen Thompson, 66 5th Ave., New York City, for the booklet containing a complete list of the pictures and to the National Board for a list of Exceptional Photoplays, which indicates the issues of the National Board Magazine in which most of these films have been reviewed.

## Motion Picture Week

THE Cleveland Cinema Club sponsored a Motion Picture Festival the week of May 6th to 13th, covering many phases of motion picture interest in the city. Mrs. W. V. Fiske, President of the Club had heard the idea presented by Mrs. Richard M. McClure at the National Board of Review Conference and she set about putting it into operation in her city. Mrs. F. R. Anderson was general chairman of the Week and the other officers of the Cinema Club collaborated with her and Mrs. Fiske in planning and carrying through a representative program of community wide activities.

The program included:

Friday, May 6th—Demonstration forum of the Progressive Education Association film activities by Dr. James Mitchell of the Frances W. Parker School, Chicago, in the morning at John Hay High School, and in the afternoon at West Technical High School.

Monday, May 9th—Presentation of cinematic work by members and guests of the Cleveland Photographic Society.

Tuesday, May 10th—Afternoon-Program on Music and the Films sponsored by the Cleveland Federation of Women's Clubs; Mrs. Arthur Huning, speaker. Evening—"From Pinheads to Parades"—illustrating work of The Cinema Laboratory, Western

(Continued on page 8)



## "The History of Motion Pictures" Reviewed

By Maurice Bardèche and Robert Brasillach, translated and edited by Iris Barry. W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., and The Museum of Modern Art. Price \$4.00.

IN spite of its title this is not *the* history of motion pictures. But it is a good one to have around till the right one comes along. A good deal of its French bias has been counteracted by the careful and sometimes belligerent footnotes which Miss Barry has added to her excellent translation, and it makes a healthy antidote to the general impression that movies have always come from Hollywood.

No book I know of has contained so nearly complete a coverage of movies over the whole world. What we in America have lacked hitherto has been any idea—even a rough idea—of what other countries than our own helped do to make the movies what they are. To those with only post-war memories foreign movies are a comparatively recent thing in our consciousness, largely to the general mind something critics and highbrows use to lambaste Hollywood with. Of course we weren't the only pioneers, or even the leaders. There was Italy, and Denmark, and Sweden, and above all France, showing us things we didn't know before. It was the war that drove them all out of business and made America the largest movie industry in the world. After the war Germany and Russia came along in the wake of Sweden as masters of the new medium, but too late for the market. Art, yes—a golden age of it; but what with ideologies, etcetera, art has given way to something largely unexportable, and consumed at home because the home-folks haven't a chance at much of anything else.

In this book you can follow the movies from their earliest days. You get the impression that most of the important things of those days were happening in France—the authors appear to have studied Benjamin B. Hampton too much and Terry Ramsaye not enough: their resumé of American activities of that era is skimpy and often inaccurate. After the beginnings comes a chapter on the pre-war film, country by country, and France and America marching along with fairly equal strides. Then the war

years brought Italy, Sweden and America to the fore, with Germany and Russia each working out a cinematic development of a kind in isolation. The period from 1919 to 1923 the authors call "The Emergence of an Art," leading to "The Classic Era of the Silent Film," 1923 to 1929. The next chapter deals with the talking film up to 1935, and a final chapter, "Forty Years of Film" brings the book to a pessimistic close. The authors don't care too much for the last few years. Miss Barry adds an editorial postscript covering up to the present, and voicing her disagreement with many of the judgments proclaimed in the work she has translated.

Most Americans would agree with her disagreements, but it is interesting and even invigorating to have some of our assumptions challenged. Moreover it is a good thing to be reminded of some things we have forgotten or overlooked, as these Frenchmen remind us: of Thomas Ince, for example, whose importance has been so completely and unjustly overshadowed here by the Griffith reputation, or of *Hallelujah*, which only Paris seems to have recognized as King Vidor's best picture.

Messieurs Bardèche and Brasillach have registered some curious reactions, somewhat national but mostly personal, to many American films, which they either didn't see or didn't understand very well. In all their judgments, even of French films, they apply a standard which includes something they call "good" or "bad" taste, by which they mean only their own taste; it makes one feel the need of a salt-cellar near by in reading their appraisals.

But the book contains a vast amount of catalogue material, as well as historical information, that is really valuable, and Miss Barry has made it extremely readable in English. It deserves a place on the movie student's small shelf to supplement Terry Ramsaye and Paul Rotha. And sometime a not impossible know-it-all will cover the whole field—all the economic, social and artistic forces that all over the world have combined to make the movie what it is. Only that will be a real history of the motion picture.

J.S.H.

# Promoting Motion Pictures

By LEON J. BAMBERGER

*Sales Promotion Manager, RKO Radio Pictures, Inc.*

*From a talk delivered by Mr. Bamberger at the National Board 1938 Conference.*

THERE is an old axiom to the effect that it is not the taste of the fisherman that should determine the bait, but the taste of the fish. This fact we, of the motion picture industry, must always bear in mind, not only in planning our productions, but in our various promotional activities.

Every day in the year about 15,000 advertisements are published by the motion picture industry in some media or other. Between \$85,000,000 and \$90,000,000 is spent by the industry every year in the United States alone for advertising. Approximately \$68,000,000 of this goes into newspapers and magazines, maybe \$11,000,000 in billboards and other outdoor advertising, approximately \$7,000,000 for direct mail, lobby displays, etc. In comparing this with the box office receipts, we find that approximately nine cents out of every dollar spent by the public for theatre admissions, goes into advertising. In addition, there are thousands of news stories, magazine articles, photographs and so forth, delivered to newspapers and magazines every week of the year, a large percentage of which are used. Then we have the radio as a great medium of advertisement.

When I was asked to give my views about the promotion of pictures, I felt that your group would not care for me to take its valuable time with any dissertation on the conventional forms of picture advertising or how we advertise pictures to the exhibitor, but would rather be interested in our direct approach to the public.

Theatres during 1937 showed a national gain of 10 per cent in attendance over 1936, showing to a weekly average of about 85,-

000,000 people, which is close to an all-time record. I do not believe that any other industry put up a more gallant fight than ours in the face of general conditions and at the same time a 20 to 30 per cent increase in production costs with no more than an average gain of one cent in admission prices.

They did this by all producers and most exhibitors putting their shoulders to the wheel and using every ounce of showmanship at their command. While the pessimistic theatre owner said, "My theatre is half empty," the optimist's cheerful rejoinder was, "My theatre is half full," and he set about to exercise his showmanship to sell the remainder of his seats.

The National Board of Review has accomplished two very definite things, in my opinion. It has affected, through its tremendous influence in the respective local communities, the box office receipts of the pictures that it recommends and supports. In addition, unknowingly perhaps, it has conditioned the selection of subject matter and treatment thereof in the studios as a result of having developed to a very great extent a discriminating motion picture audience for pictures of high quality. Therefore, I thought you would perhaps be interested to know what the industry has done, particularly our company, because after all I can speak with more knowledge about our own organization—to cultivate and attract this same clientele and help to stimulate an appreciation of the so-called better pictures.

In a very excellent article published about a year ago editor Maurice Kann said, "It has always been a firm conviction of ours that this business leans too heavily on audiences already its own without seriously endeavoring to cultivate and attract additions. There is a vast and virginal field



ahead about which something ought to be done by somebody, not as an in and out effort, but as a regular piece of assigned business. The Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America moves in that direction in what we regard as a self-starter. The momentum, for the selfish sake of their own interests, ought to be furthered by distributors."

Even at the time Mr. Kann wrote this article, RKO Radio was well on the way forward cultivating this "over and above" audience, this discriminating audience. From the time we released *Little Women* over four years ago, we have, with many fine productions, such as *The Informer*, *Winter set*, *Stage Door* and others too numerous to mention, brought into the theatres countless people who seldom, if ever, attend the movies. In the case of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* which we have the great honor to distribute, we expect to establish a record in that regard, as well as a record for general attendance. In fact, it is our humble opinion that more men, women, and children the world over will see *Snow White* than any picture that has ever been made in all screen history.

In the promotion of our so-called better pictures, we seek to enroll, by mail, the patronage and support of those large groups that do not as a rule respond to the more conventional forms of picture advertising. These groups include the Better Films Council, the women's clubs that discuss photoplays, churches, Y.M.C.A.'s, schools, music clubs, librarians, etc. We have quite a number of mailing lists that we use for this purpose, including one of 15,000 very influential key people who, by return card, have asked us to keep them notified of our coming productions and who have promised first to see the particular picture that we recommend (and we do not recommend it unless we have every reason to feel that it is a fine picture) secondly, if they like it, to help publicize it throughout their groups in various ways. This may be done by word of mouth, by club bulletins, posted or mailed, or through telephone committees whereby large numbers are reached.

The largest mailing list we have used at

any one time has totalled about 185,000. Usually it averages about 50,000. These letters are always signed by our Vice President, Mr. Ned E. Depinet, and are written on especially printed letterheads, illustrative of the picture and its stars or featured players. It gives the clubwoman or school head or librarian something attractive to post and through which to tell their constituents about the picture.

The reach of this type of promotion can best be judged by the fact that 16 alone of the organizations that we cover in this way have a membership of well over 36,000,000. These big 16 include the General Federation of Women's Clubs, American Legion Auxiliary, the International Federation of Catholic Alumnae, the National Council of Jewish Women and many others. To the best of my knowledge, our company is the only one that is *consistently* trying to sell these influential groups, at least by mail. In fact there is a pun to the effect that a certain clubwoman was showing a motion picture exhibitor around her new ultra-modern home and he said, "This is very lovely, very beautiful. There are a few things however I do not understand. Why, for instance, do you have that round hole in the front door?"

She said, "Oh, that is for those circular letters from RKO."

The result of our endeavor has been quite definite, not only in increasing box office receipts on a particular picture, but in building up in the minds of these groups the fact that our company generally makes a superior type of photoplay and that we are interested not only in securing their patronage for this or that picture, but in having their goodwill as an institution. Every time we send out one of these letters, there is a considerable number of "thank you" replies, and they are very heart-warming. When we mail the letters we always send copies to our exhibitors. We suggest to them that, whereas we can only reach the key people or officials, on account of the tremendous expense that would otherwise be involved, they should secure membership lists of such interested people in their own communities and send out similar letters. A great many exhibitors have done this and have built up

fine mailing lists of their own for this particular purpose.

Another activity in which we are not alone, but in which I think we can claim some element of leadership, is the fostering in a very active way of the study of photoplay appreciation in the schools. Today there are close to 8,000 high schools throughout America that are regularly teaching photoplay appreciation as part of their curriculum. Through working in close cooperation with the Motion Picture Committee of the Department of Secondary Education of the National Education Association, and with the Educational and Recreational Guides, Inc., we have been responsible for instituting a great many of these courses of photoplay study and for arranging that exhibitors of our pictures donate to the schools the materials they need for this purpose. For eight or nine months we had five representatives touring the country whose sole duty it was to call on the schools and explain the whys and wherefores and the methodology of this study of photoplay appreciation.

These men were thoroughly schooled before they went out, not only by us but by the educators who are the leaders of the movement. They were very successful. We felt we were not only doing a real job for RKO Radio but a job for the entire industry as well as for American education in general. These representatives, in turn, took our salesmen out in the field and taught them how to approach the schools, without any aspect of commercialism. So, today, each one of our salesmen—and we have over 100 of them throughout the country—considers it part of his job to call on the schools and encourage the study of pictures, and not only that, but to effect a close and cordial relationship between the school and the local theatre.

We believe it is just as important for the student today to be taught appreciation of good pictures as it is for him to be taught appreciation of good music, art, literature or anything else, and we feel that we are doing more than our share, as a matter of public interest, to make for more discriminating motion picture theatre-goers in the future.

## Motion Picture Week

(Continued from page 4)

Reserve University, Dr. James E. Bliss, Director.

Wednesday, May 11th—Guest Day of the Cinema Club, morning session, speaker, Mrs. Bettina Gunczy, Managing Editor of the National Board of Review Magazine.

Luncheon and visit to downtown theatre, selected by vote in the morning.

Thursday, May 12th—Afternoon—Demonstration program by Dr. H. A. Gray of Erpi Picture Consultants, in the Shore Schools.

Evening—Banquet in Ballroom of Hotel Statler. Guest speakers, Mayor Harold Burton, of Cleveland, Harry Goldberg, Director of Warner Bros. Theatres, Advertising and Publicity, A. A. Trimble, who played Will Rogers in the *Great Ziegfeld* and *You're A Sweetheart*, Ward Marsh, Motion Picture Critic, Cleveland Plain Dealer and Bettina Gunczy, National Board of Review. Hollywood costumes worn by stars, loaned for the occasion were modeled by young Cinema daughters. Early films, including a reel entitled *Theodore Roosevelt's Return from Europe*, 1910, loaned by the Roosevelt Memorial Association in New York, were shown, followed by the preview of a new Paramount picture.

Motion picture displays were arranged in the main library and many branch libraries, in stores and theatre lobbies. Western Reserve University had an exhibit of study aids for motion picture art and a fine collection of books and magazines were displayed in the Fine Arts Department of the main library. Neighborhood theatres offered special programs and the churches co-operated by giving special announcements from the pulpit on Sunday.

The Week's program served as a worthy pattern for future observances in that city, and in other cities planning for such annual programs arranged to call attention to the importance and widespread motion picture activity in the community.



# A Liberal Licensor

By COMMISSIONER PAUL MOSS,  
Department of Licenses, N. Y. C.

*Many Motion Picture Councils in their community activity have contact with the local License Commissioner or corresponding officer who has charge of the theatres in the community, and since there is need for us to understand his viewpoint and for him to understand the program of the community group based upon selection rather than censorship, we believe that the opinion on this subject expressed by Commissioner Moss of New York City at the Board's last Conference-Luncheon will be of interest to our readers.*

I represent the Mayor here today and I say sincerely he regretted being unable to be present. But, as you know, the Mayor is a very busy man and if anybody doesn't want to believe that, they can go down to City Hall now and find him there at his desk.

It is an interesting thing for me to come here because I was a member of the National Board of Review for about seven or eight years and I only gave up that very pleasant task when I was appointed License Commissioner of New York City. It might be looked upon as significant, but it really has nothing to do with it, that I was for six or seven years on the National Board of Review and since then have been held up by many people in this city, and probably other cities, as the big bad censor of New York. But it has nothing at all to do with that.

We in a Department like the License Department of the City are not at all in the same category as a censor. I, for one, say most emphatically that I do not believe in censorship. But as a License Commissioner there is an entirely different problem. A License Commissioner does not go around to theatres with an idea of censoring them, but he must listen to public opinion. I stress this all very, very strongly because wherever I go they say, "Oh don't do that because the Commissioner is here." This

idea of a Commissioner's activities has reached such a stage that the other day when a great controversy was going on down in the Council in New York a newspaper man said to me—"Why don't you go down there and stop that indecent performance?" If I am going to have to go through life as the big bad man I hope that somewhere someone will say, "Well, he isn't just that. He is really a liberal minded person."

So I say to you that I am very happy to be here. First, because I was one of the early men, with my brother, in the motion picture business. We made motion pictures in the earliest days and ran many theatres. The theatre is a part of my life. And one of the pleasantest parts of my job is to have charge of theatre licenses in New York City. I am happy also to have been a member of this splendid organization, the National Board of Review. It is a fine thing to know the work they are carrying on—not as a censorship board—because I remember, and those of you who sit in on the committees know too, that you are merely to indicate on the ballot you fill out giving your opinion of the picture, whether the picture is selected and whether for adults or for children or for all the family. It is not for the purpose of censorship, but to provide the means whereby people in local cities or towns may know before the picture comes what type of picture it is and for what audience. So it is nice for me, a non-censoring License Commissioner, to stand before a non-censoring Board of Review and to say that I am very glad to carry on the work, especially here in New York City where we have possibly the most liberal, non-censor Mayor in the whole country. There is not a more liberal person, and the last thing that would come to his mind would be to appoint a License Commissioner who would be a censor.

# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS DEPARTMENT

*This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of Exceptional and Honorable*

*Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.*

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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## Three Comrades

*Screenplay by F. Scott Fitzgerald and Edward E. Paramore from Erich Maria Remarque's novel, directed by Frank Borzage, photographed by Joseph Ruttenberg, music by Franz Waxman. Produced by Joseph L. Markiewicz for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, distributed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.*

### The Cast

Erich Lohkamp	Robert Taylor
Otto Koster	Franchot Tone
Gottfried Lenz	Robert Young
Patricia Hollman	Margaret Sullavan
Breuer	Lionel Atwill
Alfons	Guy Kibbe
Dr. Becker	Henry Hull
Local Doctor	Charles Grapevin
Dr. Jaffe	Monty Woolley

LOVE stories—though not so much now as they used to be—are generally considered the properest kind of stuff for the movies: popular appeal and all that. Yet how many pictures are remembered because they were love stories—anything more than the boy-and-girl pattern that is so taken for granted that it has to be decked out with other elements to be even entertaining? Very few, and *Three Comrades* is likely to be one of them.

*Three Comrades* might have been one of two things: a picture of post-war Germany that put all its emphasis on the violent disorder that made some sort of dictatorship practically inevitable, with the personal story of Erich and Otto and Gottfried and Pat just incidental; or what it is, these four to the front, victims of their background but that background shorn of identifiable personalities and parties. It couldn't have been both—the emergence of Nazi Germany would have been so stupendous a theme that it would have completely dwarfed the

friendship of three boys home from the war and trying to make a living, and their love for a girl whom undernourishment during the war-starved years had doomed to an early, tubercular death. The picture, since it couldn't even with the best intentions in the world, have handled the national tragedy that defeat brought to Germany, wisely elected to concentrate on what happened to four young people as a result of that tragedy (which is made purposely unexplicit). Whether or not that is a compromise, it is justified artistically as well as by expediency.

The story has the inevitability of the great love tragedies, with no villain but the woe-ful inadequacy of human nature to manage its ways without chaos and suffering. It doesn't much matter that the people do not seem particularly German: they are people caught in the hideous aftermath of war, and that might be any people. Four simple, decent people, one a girl who loves and marries one of the men, and becomes someone for all three comrades to cherish: struggling for something of the life that youth cannot help hoping for, and cheated of it, in the end two of them dead and the other two about to start all over again in South America. It isn't the kind of tragedy where the characters incur disaster through their own deeds or natures, but a more pathetic, inexplicable tragedy like that of the young dying before they have had a chance to live.

A remarkably high combination of talents has made it all very impressive and moving—good writing, a good man at the camera, good actors, and presiding over them a good director. Sometimes there seems to be a bit too much talk, but there are some things that can only be said in words and Scott



Fitzgerald (it must be he) has a gift for words well above the average of movie dialogue. When there is only something to watch, without the need of words, the director and camera man have their own kind of eloquence—such unforgettable bits as the pursuit of the boy who shot Gottfried, the glimpse from under the muffling blanket of the girl's stricken face, the startling down-swoop of the camera's eye upon the girl getting up from bed and across the room to remove the burden of her illness from those who love her. Those are high moments in a film that is full of beauty.

It is hard to say where Frank Borzage directing and Joseph Ruttenberg at the camera and the fine cast of actors supplement one another, so perfectly the work of them all merges together. Some of the lesser people are nameless in the cast—the boy with his sniping rifle, another boy at the sanatori-

um who with a bare couple of words strikes the whole atmosphere of the place, the destructive ruffians who keep the menace of dire social upheaval always grumbling in the background. The named ones are all as right as possible. Robert Taylor, for all his handsome healthiness, puts across a character one wouldn't have thought him capable of, Robert Young, who has had the good luck to escape the rut of glamor-boy and stardom, adds another to his list of clean-cut characterizations, and Franchot Tone has never done a better job. But the memorable person is Margaret Sullavan, who creates one of those rare and beautiful things that no ordinary words can describe. It is like a spell that comes back in full force every time you think of her, and tempts you to the conviction that there is no better actress on the screen.

*Rated Exceptional*

J.S.H.

## Yellow Jack

*Adapted by Edward Chodorov from the play written by Sidney Howard in collaboration with Paul de Kruif, directed by George B. Seitz, photographed by Lester White and Slavko Vorkapich, musical score by William Axt. Produced by Jack Cummings for Metro Goldwyn Mayer, distributed by Metro Goldwyn Mayer.*

### The Cast

John O'Hara	Robert Montgomery
Major Reed	Lewis Stone
Dr. Jesse Lazear	Henry Hull
Dr. Finlay	Charles Coburn
Dr. James Carroll	Stanley Ridges
"Jellybeans"	Buddy Ebsen
Busch	Sam Levene
Charlie Spill	Andy Devine
Breen	William Henry
Brinkerhof	Alan Curtis
Gorgas	Henry O'Neill
Ferguson	Philip Terry
General Leonard Wood	Jonathan Hale
Frances Blake	Virginia Bruce
Miss Macdade	Janet Beecher

**P**ERHAPS the most impressive thing about *Yellow Jack* is that after seeing it you can say, and feel, "That is something that really happened!" An after-thought of the thoughtful may be "It's the most heroic, and useful, thing a modern

army has ever done," and there may also be a bit of patriotic glow that the American army did it. Surely, in all the dubious and nationally fateful doings involved in our war with Spain and the attendant imperialistic enterprises of Roosevelt the First, nothing can be named with more pride than the final, unspectacular victory over yellow fever, and the part played in it, so remote from brass bands and battlefields, by our army officers and soldiers.

Forty years ago, in many ways, seems as remote as the middle ages, and yellow fever as mythical a terror as Jenghiz Khan or the Black Hole of Calcutta. Even farther from ordinary experience is the unimaginable war and drama that goes on in a test-tube, with disease germs fighting their gruesome battles under the microscopic eye of the scientist. All tremendously difficult material to dramatize and make alive and important for a movie audience. To have tackled it at all is remarkable—to have done it successfully almost a miracle.

Sidney Howard tried it in a play, and he had to imitate the technique of movies to get what he was after. It was a deficient play,

working half-way in another medium, just as a movie is deficient that copies too closely the methods of the stage. Its interest was in its content and spirit, and the movie that has been made from it is chiefly justified by the same interest, with the additional effec-

humanitarians were helpless about was yellow fever. Small comfort to have grown into a big, he-man nation, with colonies and a fine new white-man's burden and a prospective ship-way, so commercially and militarily important, connecting the eastern and



*One of the searchers for the cause of Yellow Jack becomes a victim*

tiveness of operating in its own legitimate field. The movie, by bringing its people closer and showing them more intimately (in the persons of familiar actors, too) has less of the effect of science working impersonally, with human beings only its instruments—and whether that is a gain or loss who knows?

In the aftermath of our war with Spain, with the problem of the Panama Canal in the offing, one of the things that statesmen and politicians and yellow journalists and

western oceans, if all the white men who had to move in and do the real work were to be killed off like flies by a disease that doctors could not cope with. So the army doctors—Reed and Gorgas and the others, with the generals and engineers and their ambitious dreams depending on them—took up their search, against infinite difficulties of ignorance and stubbornness and red-tape, that resulted in uncovering the secret of *Stegomyia*, the wicked mosquito that carried the yellow fever germ from the sick to the



well, and made the tropics a fatal place for white men. Four enlisted men were the ultimate heroes of the search, risking their lives in a hospital bed instead of on a battlefield, facing—deliberately and all alone—a deadly mosquito instead of an enemy's gun.

It takes a bit of imagination—more than the directing of the picture supplies—to see the essence of all this in a movie so populated by figures which have been seen so often in other movies that they carry an inescapable air of stereotyped familiarity with them. It is nobody's fault that the sight of Virginia Bruce in a nurse's uniform stirs up vague subconscious recollections of many a forgotten boy-and-girl affair of the screen; that Lewis Stone, grave and kindly and slightly pompous, seems much more Lewis Stone than Walter Reed; that Andy Devine is so stamped with a special kind of yokelery that there is no novelty—though a lot of truth—in his dumb buck-private. But all these things obscure the freshness and originality of the picture—it would have taken directorial genius to make us think we were seeing Virginia Bruce and Lewis Stone and Andy Devine (and that master cliché of the sinister, C. Henry Gordon) as new personalities. Genius in direction the picture has not, though it has briskness and competence. But mere competence cannot create the heat of the tropics, the dismal boredom of soldiers in barracks, the tense silent drama of the laboratory, the subtle significance of sincere men stubbornly disagreeing in a conference—and all of these things the picture lacks, and their lack keeps it from being great. What serves instead, and serves mighty well, are the performances of actors not too familiar to seem new and real, men like Charles Coburn and Stanley Ridges and Sam Levene. And above all, Robert Montgomery, who has the genuine actor's gift, whenever there is a chance to use it, of dissipating the aura of playboy with which his movie career has inevitably clothed him, and projecting a character that is real and moving, with all the freshness of something seen for the first time. His scene alone with the mosquitoes, when they have been proved the only remaining possibility of fatal infection, is the top thrill of the picture, and it is a scene in which the mosquitoes play only supporting roles.

*Rated Honorable Mention.*

J.S.H.

## The Adventures of Robin Hood

*Screenplay by Norman Reilly Raine and Seton I. Miller, directed by Michael Curtiz and William Keighley, photographed by Sol Polito and Tony Gaudio, music by Erich Wolfgang Korngold. Produced and distributed by Warner-First National.*

### The Cast

<i>Robin Hood</i> .....	<i>Errol Flynn</i>
<i>Little John</i> .....	<i>Alan Hale</i>
<i>Friar Tuck</i> .....	<i>Eugene Pallette</i>
<i>Will Scarlet</i> .....	<i>Patric Knowles</i>
<i>Maid Marian</i> .....	<i>Olivia de Havilland</i>
<i>King Richard</i> .....	<i>Ian Hunter</i>
<i>Prince John</i> .....	<i>Claude Rains</i>
<i>Sir Guy of Gisborne</i> .....	<i>Basil Rathbone</i>
<i>Sheriff of Nottingham</i> .....	<i>Melville Cooper</i>
<i>Bishop of Black Cannon</i> .....	<i>Montagu Love</i>
<i>Much</i> .....	<i>Herbert Mundin</i>
<i>Bess</i> .....	<i>Una O'Connor</i>
<i>Dickon Malbott</i> .....	<i>Harry Cording</i>

*Knights, outlaws, noblemen and poor folk*

TUCKED away in the old ballads that hardly anyone ever reads is the Robin Hood whose legend lives on in the Anglo-Saxon memory—lives the more glamorously the more it is merely a hazy memory. Children are given it in such books as the one that Howard Pyle wrote, and there they forget how synthetic and insipid the attempt to re-write old England in nursery terms really was, pap for heady ale, and remember a band of merry outlaws, robbing the unjust rich to help the worthy poor, roving adventurously in a Sherwood Forest colored with the unrivalled richness of imagination. Now they have a new kind of picture book on which to build their memories, this film the Warners have made in all the gorgeousness of the latest Technicolor. It is a pleasant thing to see, but the chances are very great that it will be far pleasanter to remember, when this and that detail are forgotten and imagination joins with memory to create something that the literalness of a book-page or a movie screen could never bring to life by itself.

With such a legend, which has no basis that anyone can be sure of in history, one version probably serves as well as another. This one keeps most of the best known characters—Little John, who tumbled Robin off the log-bridge with his staff, and Friar Tuck,



*Olivia de Havilland and Errol Flynn in "Robin Hood"*

who had to carry Robin across the brook on his back. Will Scarlet is here, a bird of paradise whose membership in the band is never explained, and Maid Marian, a haughty Norman lady who remains aloof from the greenwood till her hand is given to Robin in marriage for a happy ending. There is no Alan a Dale, but there is a fine lot of villains—a timorous High Sheriff, a poisonous, treacherous Prince John, an overbearing Sir Guy, a wicked bishop, and for low comedy a couple of Herbert Mundin—Una O'Connor mugging parts of the kind they have been exceeding their quota on ever since they invaded America with *Cavalcade*. King Richard of the Lion Heart is here, back from his Crusade looking very

clean and well-fed, lamb-like but pleasant, and his recognition by Robin and his men is one of the rare moments when action and excitement give place to real feeling that springs out from the screen and catches the audience.

Mostly the picture is full of movement, some of it dashing in the fine romantic costume style, some of it just sprightly. The excitement comes from fast action—galloping steeds, men swinging Tarzan-like down from trees, hurling tables and chairs, rapid running sword-play, the sudden whiz of Robin's arrows coming from no-where to startle his enemies—more than from any fear that Robin might be worsted. Robin is more than equal to any danger, incredibly



strong and swift and sure, politely arrogant, always flashing a smile.

Somehow the whole thing has an air of being a costume party, a jolly and rather athletic one, with a lot of well-bred Englishmen playing at being in the greenwood. Their bright, fresh clothes, their house-party kind of conversation, the clean castles and neat forests, might all have been something an affluent host arranged for the entertainment of summer guests. Only Alan Hale looks and acts as if he could be at home in the woods.

There is some charming color in the film, and quite a lot of brilliant dazzle. Some of the actors, like Montagu Love and Claude Rains, might have stepped out of a history book. The others live up to the picture-book quality of the film, which has the supreme virtue of a movie—except for some tedious and modernish love-making it keeps moving.

And so another generation can get acquainted with some of the imperishable figures of English folk-lore. It may interest them enough to send them to the library, to read the ballads. Or maybe to read a history, in which they will find that Richard did not tarry long in England, and that the wicked John became king after all, and such a bad king that he precipitated Magna Charta and the beginnings of democracy. Maybe Robin Hood prepared the ground.

*Rated Honorable Mention* J.S.H.

## Spain in the Movies

WHAT is happening in Spain could furnish enough movies to fill all of Hollywood's production schedules, and probably every Hollywood producer has tried to devise some way of making a Spanish war picture that wouldn't get into trouble. What we have had has not come from Hollywood: it has been pro-Loyalist films like *The Spanish Earth* (Ivens-Hemingway) and *The Heart of Spain* and *Spain in Flames*, which have been banned right and left; pro-Franco films would have met with just as violent opposition. Each side in the Spanish

conflict has so many sympathizers here that it is impossible to touch the Spanish question without offending some of them, and the last thing a movie producer wants to do is to offend anybody.

But Walter Wanger has tried—tried for months and months, with no one knows how much re-writing and weighing of chances, and has finally presented, with John Howard Lawson's name on the script, something that is surely a masterpiece of evasion. *Blockade* tries its best to hide the fact that it is about the present war in Spain: it calls no names, takes no nominal sides, puts all its emphasis on a stereotyped plot about a girl spy who falls in love with a soldier on the side she is working against, and on what the non-fighters suffer in wartime, but it isn't going to deceive anyone. Pro-Loyalists are going to say it isn't Loyalist enough: it doesn't really present their side; pro-Rebels will call it propaganda against them. Only those who aren't pro-anything except pro-peace will accept and praise it for what it outspokenly is: passionately against war.

Everybody who reads the newspapers, with their constant reports of Loyalist towns being successfully besieged and cut off from supplies, will infer that Castelmare, the fictitious town of the film, is one of them. To that extent the film labels itself. Otherwise the hero, a young peasant who loves his land and takes up arms to defend it when war comes along with its ruin, belongs to no special side—he is made to seem fighting only for his home. The people who appear to be engineering the blockade are even more carefully disguised as non-identifiable—the most one can make of them is that they go about the world stirring up wars, perhaps to increase ammunition sales. They are made very villainous, but for what purpose and in whose interest is carefully hidden.

The film's weaknesses all come from its being set in Spain and at the same time trying to avoid all the essential elements of what is going on in Spain. That is probably the reason for using such a trite spy plot, which was no doubt considered completely non-controversial. It involves, however, such a dull love story, full of incredible things like the simple peasant quoting Byron lengthily to the lovely lady from far away



*The girl spy learns about bombardments in "Blockade"*

during their long and hackneyed conversations, that the scenes of fighting and destruction and suffering take on immense emphasis by comparison. The bombing of defenceless homes, the killing of women and children, the starvation of the civilian population unless relief ships with food can get through the blockade, become supremely and tragically important, and as they are the best directed and best acted scenes, they give the picture its final tone and its final message. And nobody, no matter how indifferent to the Spanish issues, who feels the impact of these powerful episodes, can help asking "Why?" And so the controversy has not been escaped at all.

Madeleine Carroll does another of her

lady spy parts—as lovely as ever, and quite the same in all other respects. Henry Fonda isn't any more Spanish than he was in *The Farmer Takes a Wife*, but he is immensely sincere and effective, especially in the tremendously moving outburst against war that ends the picture. Reginald Denny is one of the rightest things in the film, as a reporter, and Leo Carillo at last has a part that isn't all comic hokum. The villains—being utterly wicked without discernable motive—are just melodramatic stock-figures.

The picture, excellent as many competent people have made it in spots, is most of all a proof that if the movies want to be neutral they'd better stay out of Spain.

J.S.H.



## Fritz Lang

F RITZ LANG must be a tremendous problem to producers as well as to himself. He can't be brought, and he can't bring himself, to do ordinary things in an ordinary way. Such gifts as went into the making of *M*, and *Fury*, aren't for the run-of-the-mill program picture, as *You and Me*, is convincing proof. Anybody might have done this story as well as it deserved to be done, a not particularly novel thing about a man and a girl on parole, the man's efforts to keep clear of the old gang, and his melodramatic resentment of the girl's keeping a secret from him. (her own criminal record.) The difference from other stories of the kind comes from avoiding the usual hostile attitude of society toward ex-convicts trying to go straight, and allowing some practical sympathizers to do something helpful for the unfortunates. In general, though, the story is not unusual, and Lang has tried to make up for that by unusual treatment. His individual touch is visible everywhere, in handling both characters and situations, but for the ordinary George Raft fan it will not only be unappreciated, it will be actually confusing. And the musical idiom of Kurt Weil, so heavily different from the incidental music of the usual movie, will not help. So the picture will appeal only to Fritz Lang specialists, and that is a pity, because, as he is one of the few really creative artists among directors, everything he does ought to be of a kind to attract big audiences. It is work like his that raises the level of production and appreciation, and he should be doing stories where his work counts for all it is worth.

boys go wrong and get saved by an earnest young man in love with the sister of one of them. It's a pity, because the Warners have a swell record for dramatizing reality, and the list of productions they have made in defense of ideas and social reforms is something for the movies to be proud of. But here are these kids—Dead End kids they were called before they became the Crime School kids—not very good actors but tough as devils: what's to be done with them before they get too big or too tiresome? Obviously they have to be criminals, and since criminals are out, in the movies, unless they reform, there is apparently a series of kid-toughs-reformed on its way, to flourish as long as the public shows enough interest in it.

There is plenty of value in such pictures when they have enough truth in them. *The Devil is a Sissy* and *Boy of the Streets* were genuine and important—written with understanding of the characters and conditions, and acted by two of the best young actors, Jackie Cooper and Mickey Rooney. But *Crime School*, after a conventional but convincing exhibition of young toughies trying to find things to do on the street, moves into a plot of which any half-awake movie-goer can call every turn with only one eye open. Such stories can't be written out of a man's own head or his memory of old melodramas—they have to be written from genuine knowledge. And if they are to have any "social significance," that term the Warners have earned as almost a trade mark, they need the best talent that can be found, in writing, directing and acting. The Warners cheat when they offer something in this line that isn't of the best, because they have built up an expectation of the best.

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## Melodrama Pattern

T HERE are other plot formulas besides the boy-meets-girl one, even in films with what they call "social content." The Russians have been working at the same formula for years. *Crime School* looks as if the Warners were tying up to one—how

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P ICTURES referred to the Committee on Exceptional Photoplays will be noted as usual on the Weekly Guide during the summer and will receive comment in the first fall issue of the Magazine.

## Motion Picture Activities Reported at the Board Conference

ONE session of the Board's Annual Conference was given to a reporting of organization motion picture activities, by the delegates in attendance from various groups. From month to month these have been printed in our Magazine and here we present several more.

**Mrs. Alonzo Richardson**  
**Secretary, Atlanta (Ga.)**  
**Board of Review**

AS I look back over what we have accomplished and realize that the ten best pictures made during 1937 were just the type of pictures we have been wanting all these years, I feel that it is a matter of congratulation to us, as well as to the industry. We threw the challenge out to the industry first—give us good pictures. They threw the challenge back in our faces—give us audiences for good pictures. So we have gone to work on that line to get the good audiences for the good pictures.

I have wondered what Atlanta's part has been in this splendid achievement. We have 350,000 inhabitants with just as many opinions regarding pictures as there are people. That makes it sometimes rather difficult for the Better Films Committee to impress upon the manager just exactly what type of picture he should show. But we have achieved a plan so that when we find a great picture we put out about ten thousand letters. We have a card-index mailing list of representative people, and when cards or letters are sent in the name of the Better Films Committee with an endorsement of a picture they really mean something. We have also a telephone committee.

We have twenty-seven theatres and we have done some very fine things with these theatres. We review the films and send the reviews immediately to the libraries. There is no excuse for a mother in Atlanta today not to know three hours after a picture is put on whether it is best for her child to

see it if she will take the trouble to pick up the telephone and ask the city librarian. We send our reviews to Hollywood, and to the National Board of Review. We have study courses and organizations for motion picture appreciation in all of our schools. And I am very happy to say that one of our contestants in the *Romeo and Juliet* contest won the national prize and went to England as the guest of the company. Also, one of our teachers prepared her Master's degree thesis on motion picture appreciation and won very high applause and praise for it.

With our twenty-seven theatres, reviewing 289 pictures, putting on a children's matinee on Christmas Day, distributing 3700 tickets to the under privileged children of Atlanta, having two thousand of them guests of the Fox Theatre, we are so busy. We are doing what all of you are doing. We have not the time, really, to tell you about it.

We also have monthly luncheons at which we have inspirational speakers, but I think the best thing we have done this year has been the work in the schools. There was held in Atlanta an audio-visual education conference with which the Better Films Committee cooperated. It was a three-day meeting with speeches made by representatives from schools throughout the United States. I firmly believe that the educational work is the work of the future for films and for Better Films Committees. It is one of the largest parts of our work.

I realize perfectly what many of you women do; that it is very difficult to get into the schools because they are so afraid of being commercialized. And, when you once get an entree into the schools you have to be so careful about what use you make of it. I do feel with the audio-visual educational conference which we had, and with our contact now with the schools, which is very certain and very secure, that there is for my city, at least, a brilliant future along



educational lines that will rear an audience towards a better appreciation of fine things for the future.

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**Mrs. S. S. Sutherland,  
Pre-View Chairman, Detroit Motion  
Picture Council and State and Detroit  
Motion Picture Chairman, Federated  
Church Women of Detroit**

OUR council is only a little over one year old and we are just learning to walk. We started out by asking certain representatives from many worthwhile groups to meet, and at that time our Greater Detroit Motion Picture Council was born. The Mayor and the Commissioner of Police were asked to be associate members. Representatives were there from the Board of Education, the D. A. R., the Federation of Women's Clubs, the Federated Church people, the Catholic organizations and others.

We have now what we feel is a model constitution, if any constitution could be a model, but we will keep working on it. We are divided into departments. We have a membership department, a legislation department, a pre-view department, and an education department, which is the most important department of all.

Under this education department we had a very fine class last summer. We studied the book "How to Shop for Your Movies," in a motion picture appreciation class. We are trying now to have photoplay appreciation in our high schools. We are doing everything we can. We came to this conference to learn from other people's experience what we can do.

In our legislation department we worked with our police on a new age law. I do not know whether this is the most satisfactory age law yet. There were nine different ordinances introduced in our State Legislature this last year. They never reached committee because of the activities of certain people in our council. Among them were: Will we have dog racing in our state? Will we have slot machines in our theatres? Then, a state censorship board, and that was defeated.

In Detroit we have probably a different set-up than most any other city. Our motion pictures are rated, evaluated, and banned by one man. He is called the police censor, and is appointed by our Commissioner, but he is very anxious to give us the very best pictures that he can because, as he says, he has the women "hanging on his neck." We can sit with this police censor any time and help him.

At the time we were organized, our two finest motion picture houses were having vaudeville, salacious vaudeville, especially in one house, and we corrected that. Another thing we have done, is to eliminate Bank Nights and Screeno.

We are interested in the educational angle of this work. That is the important thing. For example, we want mothers to find out the pictures their daughters see, not after they have seen them, but before, and to discuss them.

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Mrs. W. O. Merrill, President of the Detroit Council was also at the Conference and, though she gave the time for reporting to one of her officers, she said "You can see by the talk of our pre-view chairman that we are deadly serious and very much in earnest in our work in Detroit. You can see that the work has grown out of a real necessity and that we are working along the lines which have been discussed so far at this Conference. We feel that it is quite a step forward when in the new child age law we make the parent equally responsible with the theatre manager in the breaking of the law. I hope at the next national meeting to have something of really great constructive importance to report."

We believe that this hope will come true, for the enthusiasm of the group is going to make up for what it lacks in age. Also in attendance from the well-represented Greater Detroit Council was Mrs. Charles H. Marden, who is a Council president in her own neighboring community of Grosse Pointe, Michigan.

**Mrs. Charles T. Owens**  
**President, Philadelphia Motion Picture**  
**Forum**

WE found in Philadelphia, and in all Pennsylvania for that matter, that Better Films Committee study groups came and went with a change of administration. There was always a lapse between administrations while new chairmen learned or did not learn what to do. There were six of us who had gone through that thing with state administrations, several times in patriotic and federated and other groups, so we went into a huddle and decided to have a forum.

We organized a forum of the six of us and at the first meeting we had a speaker. At the next meeting we had 125 present. We found there was a need in Philadelphia and its vicinity for just such a group. We have grown by leaps and bounds and have had lots of fun and learned a lot. We have grown to the point where our luncheon this year had about five hundred people. At every luncheon we try to have an inspirational speaker and an educational speaker. In that way we have gained many members.

Our principal activity is carrying out certain immediate objectives. Many of you do exactly these same things, except perhaps we have been specializing a little more on deploring double-billing, which necessitates, we feel, quantity production and results in a program of undue length. We have had very little of that in Philadelphia, and we are not going to have more if we can help it. So we are taking a definite stand before it gets too far on the way.

Another thing that we have stressed especially is the installation of hearing devices for the use of the deaf. We publicize the theatres equipped in this way so that the deaf may know and patronize them. There are eighty thousand in Philadelphia alone who enjoyed the silent films but cannot hear sound pictures, so we thought we would try to do what we could for them.

We also get out three thousand Guides to Motion Picture entertainment every month. These are given to libraries, schools, churches, groups and individuals. They take

care of the downtown theatres. We use the National Board of Review and West Coast, East Coast reviews. Mrs. Loeb, our editorial chairman gives a great deal of thought and time to the preparation of these Guides.

When a great picture like *Emile Zola* or *Victoria the Great* comes along, we send out ten thousand letters about it jointly with the Philadelphia Federation of Women's Clubs and Allied Organizations. We do not give this support to very many pictures because we do not want to lessen the value, but if fine ones came along pretty fast we would.

We have a study class that meets once a month. The Forum meets the fourth Monday and they meet the second Thursday. We try to study and discuss the motion picture. We have papers and generally get to be a well informed group that really does know something about motion pictures. Our Study Group Chairman calls it preparedness. We are prepared to understand and get more from the motion picture and do more along the lines of education.

We as a Forum are particularly an inspirational group. Every woman in our Forum, and we number a great many, has a group of her own and she takes the inspiration from the Forum meeting back to it. Each group has its own study classes, its own motion picture days and does work in its own way. One of our group chairmen this year working with the Welfare Committee gave out three thousand food baskets. That is the sort of thing we do through the theatres. We gave the theatre full credit for this charity and did not take it ourselves.

We have a slogan, "Finer Films for Audiences, and Audiences for Finer Films." We are very anxious that the advertising in our local papers be exactly right and we feel that this has been accomplished in no uncertain way. If they do slip a little bit and we go down to see them, we do not have to say a word. They simply say, "We know what you came for." It has gotten to be really smooth sailing and I am afraid we will get lazy, so we will think up new activities to keep us alive.



**Mrs. William Platt, Executive Committee  
Schools Motion Picture Committee  
of New York City**

THE Schools Motion Picture Committee, which is a group of parents and teachers from New York schools, has started programs in neighborhood theatres suitable for young people and children. And when I say programs I do not mean feature pictures that are approved for young people, I mean an entire program in which not only the feature picture, but the shorts, the news-reels, and the trailers are equally suitable. In other words, even when we have approved a feature picture, it does not appear on any of our lists unless it is one of our cooperating theatres, and unless that feature picture is surrounded by an entirely suitable program from start to finish.

We have also been working lately on programs for the younger children over the week ends. There are several theatres now which have Saturday morning programs and some of these are now running on later into the afternoon. They are made up from shorts on our selected lists. This we found necessary because younger and younger children are being taken to the theatre.

The managers tell us these approved programs are often very hard to make as good as they wish, because there seems to be a great difficulty in getting the better older films that are suitable for children. Films such as *David Copperfield* are either entirely impossible to get or may be in such a bad condition that they are not worth showing. I have a feeling that one thing all of us ought to begin to work on is some way of saving for future use the better films as they come along, not have them disappear so suddenly. We ought to preserve them. We often have to substitute films that are not so good and seem to have hung on rather than the more excellent ones which are impossible to get. We also have hope, now that *Snow White* has come out, that there will be more films like it for these programs.

The response of the theatre managers and the young people to these week-end programs has been so good that we have been able to expand. We started in 1935, with three theatres who were willing to have us look over their whole program. We now have over three hundred, some of them independent theatres, some chain theatres, and some special theatres. When I say we have three hundred theatres that does not mean we have every week-end three hundred theatres on our list, but that any week-end any of those three hundred theatres, having a suitable feature and with all the other parts of the program equally suitable, may be on our list.

These lists appear in New York papers either Thursday or Friday. They also appear in *Cue*, and in school publications, on the bulletin boards, in the Public Library, and are brought in other ways to the attention of the public. We have had articles in the newspapers on what we are trying to do and we have had some very encouraging and appreciative articles in the trade papers which help us a great deal. As a result of these articles people from all over the country, even from as far west as Hollywood, are beginning to write and ask us what our plan is and how it works and how, if possible, they can start similar ideas in their own neighborhoods.

Of course, what we have done so far is just a beginning. What we need to do, as I think most people have been saying in this discussion, is to get to all the theatres, and especially the smaller, cheaper theatres. The theatres where the neighborhood children are shunted by their parents who need the space at home and want to get the children off their hands, theatres in neighborhoods where the parents are not going to look through the newspapers and read these carefully selected lists, but are just going to have the children go as soon as they can and stay as long as they can. If we can make any kind of headway in that sort of theatre, I think we will have really begun to do something very fine.

## The Juniors Hold Their Spring Conference

**O**VER three hundred boys and girls gathered to discuss their motion picture interests on Saturday, May 21st, in the school of Education Auditorium of New York University. They represented their 4-Star Clubs which are the groups formed under the direction of the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures in elementary and high schools, community houses, etc., throughout the country for the study of the motion picture.

The Chairman of the Conference, Arthur Ward of the Rutherford, N. J. High School Cinema Club, opened the morning session with the showing of the four prize winning "Make Your Own Movies" Contest films. "Virtue is Not Enough"—first prize in the Beginners Class—made by Point Loma High School Photoplay Club, San Diego, Calif.

"The Way to Victory"—honorable mention in the Beginners Class—made by East Side High School Photo Patrons Club, Newark, N. J.

"Trouble or Nothing"—first prize in the Advanced Class—made by the Greenwich (Conn.) High School Photoplay Club.

"Reaching for Knowledge"—honorable mention in the Advanced Class—made by the Central High School Photoplay Club, Newark, N. J.

In presenting the two first prizes, silver engraved cups, Dr. Frederic M. Thrasher, Professor of Education of New York University said: We all know that making films takes time and effort, but we can have a great deal of fun and learn much while making them.

The two prize winning films will be shown on the program of the summer meeting of the Department of Visual Instruction of the National Education Association at the session on Wednesday afternoon, June 29th.

The Chairman of last year's Conference, Jack Bush, who has been with the March of Time since his graduation from Alexander Hamilton High School last June, told stories of the March of Time as seen by one who has carried his school motion picture interest on into a position of participation in film production.

The afternoon session started with the

awarding of prizes to the Exhibit Contest winners which had been chosen during the luncheon recess by the judging committee of three: Mrs. Fred B. Ross, Motion Picture Chairman, New Jersey Bergen County PTA; Miss Rita Hochheimer, Assistant Director of Visual Instruction, New York City Schools; and Mrs. Irving Heyman, Secretary, Schools Motion Picture Committee. As Mrs. Ross, in awarding the prizes said, the Committee had a difficult time picking the best of the really excellent exhibits.

First prize, awarded to the East Side High School Photo Patrons Club, Newark, N. J., was a copy of the book "The History of Motion Pictures," presented through courtesy of the publishers, W. W. Norton & Co. This book is reviewed on page five of this issue of the Magazine. Two second prizes were awarded: one, to an elementary school club, the Eagle Eyed Reviewers of P.S. 41, New York City, was a year's subscription to "Story Parade", presented through courtesy of the publishers; and the other, to Central High School Photoplay Club, Newark, N. J., was a year's subscription to "Cinema Progress", presented through courtesy of the publishers, the American Institute of Cinematography.

The awards in the "Snow White Review Contest"—two original Walt Disney sketches presented through courtesy of Walt Disney Productions and RKO Radio Pictures Corp.—were then presented by Mr. Wilton A. Barrett, Executive Secretary of the National Board, who said:

"I want to call this one thing to your attention—the work you are doing as Young Reviewers is in line with the activity which people now, for thirty years or more, have been carrying on in regard to the motion picture, studying it, talking about it, directing it, and seeing what steps we have taken to improve the films and the different uses of the films. In your hands is the future of this work. You are a part of that work, you are the motion picture audience of tomorrow. Some people tell us that the motion picture is just entertainment, just something in the theatre where we can sit down. The motion picture is whatever the people make it. The motion picture has a tremendous future as a cultural interest. There are



many people who insist that the movies are just for entertainment, but whatever interests people entertains people."

The program continued with the Club Activities Forum. All the talks delivered by the juniors at this session appear in the current 4-STAR FINAL, copies of which may be secured by those interested, if they will ask for them. See form on opposite page.

## Selected Pictures Catalog

(Continued from page 3)

- m \*THREE COMRADES — See Exceptional Photoplays Dept. page 10.
- m VIVACIOUS LADY—Ginger Rogers, James Stewart. Original story by I. A. R. Wylie. Directed by George Stevens. A lively comedy of a night club singer who marries a professor and their difficulties when it comes to breaking the news to his family. Amusing situations and clever dialogue. RKO Radio.
- m WIVES UNDER SUSPICION—Warren William, Gail Patrick. Directed by James Whale. Stage play by Ladislav Fodor. An interesting story of how a District Attorney's reaction to something in his own life which parallels the case he is prosecuting, brings him to a fuller understanding of man's frailty. Universal.
- f \*YELLOW JACK—Robert Montgomery. See Exceptional Photoplays Dept. page 11.

## SHORT SUBJECTS

### CARTOONS AND COMEDIES

- fj BIG BIRDCAST, THE (Color Rhapsodies)—Some amusing take-offs with birds showing our popular radio stars in new plumage. Columbia.
- fj BRAVE LITTLE TAILOR (Walt Disney Cartoon)—Walt Disney's version of Grimm's fairy story "The Little Tailor or Seven at One Stroke". RKO Radio.
- j DONALD'S LUCKY DAY (Walt Disney Cartoon)—Donald Duck has a narrow escape with a time bomb. RKO Radio.
- fj \*FARMYARD SYMPHONY (A Silly Symphony)—Typical Disney baryard creatures take vocal part in a morning outburst of music. RKO Radio.
- fj HOLD IT (Color Classics)—Very nice musical cartoon of cats. Paramount.
- fj INJUN TROUBLE (Looney Tunes Cartoon)—Porky's adventures with an Indian. Vitaphone.
- fj ISLE OF PINGO PONGO (Merrie Melodies)—A clever cartoon of a comedy travelogue done in color. Vitaphone.
- fj KRAZY MAGIC (Krazy Kat Cartoon)—What happens when cats get mixed up in magic. Columbia.
- fj NOW THAT SUMMER IS GONE (Merrie Melodies Cartoon)—Storing up for winter, done in color. Vita.

### MUSICALS, NOVELTIES AND SERIALS

- fj DREAM COMES TRUE, A (Floyd Gibbons' "Your True Adventure")—The story of a little girl who believes in wishes. Vitaphone.
- f FORGOTTEN STEP, THE (M-G-M Miniatures)—An adaptation of an actual crime which was almost a perfect crime. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f FREDDIE RICH AND HIS ORCHESTRA—Good playing and singing. Vitaphone.
- fj JUGGLING FOOL, THE—Some excellent juggling. Vitaphone.
- fj LONE RANGER, THE (Serial) Nos. 13-15—Starring Lee Powell and Herman Brix. Screen story by Benny Shipman. Directed by William Markay and John English. A serial of the pioneer days. All but one of a band of rangers are wiped out by the outlaws and the lone ranger swears vengeance. Plenty of excitement with Silver, the beautiful white horse, as a symbol of law and order. Republic.

- f MUSIC FROM THE STARS—A roof-garden orchestra, photographed with unusual camera-angle effects. Educational.
- f OUT WHERE THE STARS BEGIN—A revue done in color. Vitaphone.
- f SCREEN SNAPSHOTS NO. 6—Stars attend the opening of *Hurricane*. Columbia.
- f STRANGER THAN FICTION NO. 52—Mechanical tree chopper; boy pianist; a perfectly round house built in Florida; a trained kitten; a turtle painter for pet shops; women butchers; a home made entirely out of newspapers; a wonderfully trained dog. Universal.
- f WANDERLUST (Floyd Gibbons' "Your True Adventure")—The story of a boy who turns hobo. Vitaphone.

### INFORMATIONALS

- f COME ACROSS (Crime Doesn't Pay Series)—An interesting picture showing the difficulties bank robbers encounter while hiding out and their ultimate capture. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj CZECHOSLOVAKIA ON PARADE (Fitzpatrick Travel-talk)—Beautiful to look at and very friendly to the mid-European republic. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f GOING PLACES NO. 52—Lowell Thomas takes us to Mexico, both the new and old. Universal.
- f GREAT GUNS—Sweden as a center for the arms industry. Good and graphic portrayal of what a gun goes through before leaving its birthplace. Good English commentary. Scandinavian Talking Pictures.
- f \*MARCH OF TIME NO. 10—Covers, in its usual excellent fashion, Racketeers vs. Housewives, exposing cheats who victimize housewives; England's Bankrupt Peers, the results of England's heavy taxes on large land-owners; Friend of the People, impending activities of Congressmen seeking re-election. RKO Radio.
- f PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 10—Shipping on the Chesapeake Bay; Robert Bruce "The Clouds Go By" in technicolor; feeding the animals at the Bronx Zoo. Para.
- f PATHE PARADE NO. 6—"Count of Ten"—training prize fighters. RKO Radio.
- f PEARL OF THE EAST—A trip through India done in color. Vitaphone.
- f POPULAR SCIENCE NO. 5—Cotton picking; dolls modeled after real children; how time is taken by the stars; commercial greenhouses where vegetables are grown in water; how radio sound effects are produced. Done in color. Paramount.
- fj RETURN OF THE BUFFALO—How the buffalo vanished from the western plains, slaughtered wantonly by the white settlers, and how they are being brought back by conservation. Educational.
- fj RURAL SWEDEN—A Fitzpatrick Traveltalk in color. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj SURE HEROES (Pete Smith Specialty)—How beach life-savers are trained and how they work. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f THAT MOTHERS MIGHT LIVE (M-G-M Miniatures)—About the man whose book planted the seed which grew—long after his own discouraged life—into a successful movement for sanitation in hospitals. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f TREASURE IN THE FOREST—An excellent showing of the process from lumber to paper; commentary in English gives ample explanation of this Swedish industry. Scandinavian Talking Pictures.
- fj VITAPHONE PICTORIAL REVIEW NO. 9—Making silver; ice boating; and the science of railroading—model railroads. Vitaphone.
- fj VITAPHONE PICTORIAL REVIEW NO. 10—Showing beavers at work making a dam; the ancient game of polo with some excellent slow motion; the story of wool—showing process of weaving cloth. Vitaphone.

## Please Send Me!

THE NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF  
MOTION PICTURES

70 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

I wish the *Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures* sent to me during the summer. ☐

I wish a copy of the June 4\* *Final* reporting the Junior Conference. ☐

I wish a copy of the *Annual Catalog of Selected Pictures, 1937-38*. ☐ (free to Magazine subscribers, otherwise 25c).

Name .....

Address .....

## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures is a citizen body, organized in 1909 by the People's Institute of New York City as a medium for reflecting intelligent public opinion regarding a growing art and entertainment. This is still the Board's function, together with that of disseminating information on the subject of motion pictures and carrying on a constructive program having to do with community cooperation in the advancement and uses of the motion picture.

The National Board is opposed to legal censorship and is in favor of the community better films plan for placing emphasis upon and building support for the finer and more worthwhile films. It is at all times glad to cooperate with any agency to encourage and guide the motion picture in developing its possibilities both as recreation and as entertainment.

It carries on its work through various committees. All members of the committees serve without pay. No member is connected with the motion picture industry. They are representative of varied interests and activities and many are connected with large public welfare organizations or educational institutions.

The General Committee is a body evolved out of the original group organized in 1909. It is the appeal and central advisory committee of the National Board to which policies are referred and to which decisions of the Review Committee regarding pictures may be carried either by the producers or by the Review Committee itself.

The Executive Committee is composed of members of the General Committee and is the directing body of the National Board, charged with the formulation of policies, the election of members, the expenditure of funds and supervision of all administrative affairs.

The Review Committee is a large group of 300 members carrying on the work of reviewing the films. It is divided into sub-groups which meet for review per schedule during each week in the projection rooms of the various motion picture companies.

The Membership Committee supervises the membership list of the Review Committee and recommends the names of proposed new members for consideration by the Executive Committee.

The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays is composed of critics and students of the cinema interested particularly in encouraging the artistic development of the motion picture. It reviews and publishes a critique of the finest films and assists community groups in the showing of unusual films to special audiences. Its pioneer activity has done much to lay the foundation for the Little Photoplay Theatre movement and to stimulate the organization of subscription groups to develop audiences for the support of the creative achievements of the screen.

## NATIONAL MOTION PICTURE COUNCIL

The community or field work of the National Board of Review is conducted under its National Motion Picture Council, through affiliated membership groups, service contact groups and correspondents throughout the country. The National Council assists in the organization and program of work of local groups which are usually called Councils.

These Councils follow a plan initiated by the National Board in 1916 of having a membership composed of representatives from many organizations, cultural, educational, recreational, religious, and civic, so that they typify the original movement for community participation in the development and best use of the motion picture as recreation and education.

The objectives of such organizations are as follows:

To demonstrate through the education of public opinion, the effectiveness of selection and classification, instead of censorship, as a means of forwarding the development of the motion picture and its best uses.

To encourage through open meetings, forums, classes and other means, the study of the motion picture as a medium of entertainment, education and artistic expression.

To concentrate the attention of the public on specific worthwhile films through the publication of a Photoplay Guide to the selected pictures being currently shown at local theatres.

To arrange family Friday night or week-end programs of selected films, and junior matinees of pictures particularly suited to the tastes of children, through cooperation with local exhibitors.

To endorse and further the use of visual education through motion pictures in the schools.

To arrange and promote occasional exhibitions of exceptional and cultural films that would not normally be shown in the commercial theatres.

### PUBLICATIONS

The National Board of Review and its Council as an aid to the groups carrying out these objectives furnished an informational service through its publications.

**National Board of Review Magazine (monthly)**

\$2.00 a year for individual subscriptions

\$1.00 a year to Council or club groups.

**Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures**

\$2.50 a year when taken alone, available at a special rate of \$1.00 in conjunction with the Magazine.

**Selected Pictures Catalog (annual).....25c**

**Special Film Lists .....10c ea.**

Such as Selected Films for Children's Showings, Selected Book-Films, Educational Films, etc.

**National Board of Review—Its Background, Growth and Present Status.....free**

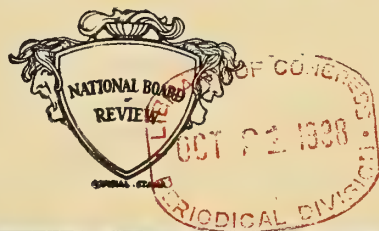
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**A Plan and a Program for Community Motion Picture Councils .....10c**



# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

Vol. XIII, No. 7



October, 1938



*Jean Gabin, Dita Parlo and Dalio in "Grand Illusion" (see page 15)*

*Published monthly except July, August and September  
by the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures*

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\$ 2.00 a year

# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

f BLACK BANDIT, THE—Bob Baker, Marjorie Reynolds, Hal Taliaferro. Screenplay by Joseph West. Directed by George Wag-  
gner. Interestingly told and capably acted western about twin boys one of whom runs away and grows up to be an outlaw, plac-  
ing his brother, who has become sheriff, in a dangerous position. Universal.

fj \*BOYS TOWN—See Exceptional Photoplays Dept., page 18.

f CAMPUS CONFESSIONS—William Henry, Hank Luisetti, Betty Grable. Screen story by Lloyd Corrigan and Edwin Gilsey. Di-  
rected by George Archainbaud. Pranks and scrapes in a co-ed college, where a lively girl converts a serious young man to ath-  
letics and he leaps from disgrace to being the college hero by becoming a basket-ball star. There is a last minute victory. Para-  
mount.

f \*DARK RAPTURE—Directed by Armand Denis. One of the most interesting and convincingly authentic of the African pic-  
tures. The Armand Denis-Leila Roosevelt expedition into Belgian Congo spent three years taking these films of the daringly  
courageous river tribes, the physically dis-  
torted forest tribes, the pygmies and their marvelous bridge building, and the tribes  
of magnificent giants who live beyond the high volcanic mountains. Recommended  
for school or libraries. Universal.

f \*HOLD THAT CO-ED!—John Barrymore, George Murphy, Joan Davis. Original screen  
story by Karl Tunberg and Don Ettlinger. Directed by George Marshall. Something

new in football pictures—fantastic, satirical farce, involving the present style of circus-  
ballyhoo political campaigns. John Barry-  
more, state governor, uses the state univer-  
sity football team to help in his election. Also there's a girl goal-kicker. Really funny,  
with a sharp edge to its comedy. 20th  
Century-Fox.

f JUVENILE COURT—Paul Kelly, Frankie Darro, Rita Hayworth. Original screen  
story by Michael Simmons, Robert Kent, Milton Taylor. Directed by D. Ross Le-  
derman. Another treatment of the slum-  
boy problem, in this case solved by a  
Police Athletic Association, which removes  
the antagonism between kids and cops. Probably every repetition of this problem  
helps increase the consciousness of its  
importance. Columbia.

m LADY OBJECTS, THE — Gloria Stuart, Lanny Ross. Original screen story by  
Gladys Lehman and Charles Kenyon. Di-  
rected by Erle C. Kenton. The difficulties  
that came to a devoted young couple when  
the wife got ahead of the husband in her  
professional career. Serious in theme, but  
handled without heaviness and Lanny Ross  
sings several songs engagingly. Columbia.

m LANCIERI DI SAVOIA OVVERO SACRI-  
CIO SUPREMO (The Savoy Lancers or  
The Supreme Sacrifice)—Elisa Cegani, En-  
rico Viarisio. Screen story by Elisa Cegani  
and Silvana Jazhino. Directed by Gof-  
fredo Alessandri. A handsome panoramic  
picture with the Italian cavalry as a back-  
ground to an unhappy love between two  
young people. The time extends from 1901  
to the world war, and the hero, after leav-  
ing the cavalry for flying, dies a heroic  
death. Having no English sub-titles this  
film is recommended for Italian audiences.  
Roma.

fj MYSTERIOUS RIDER, THE—Douglas Dum-  
brille, Russell Harden, Charlotte Field. Novel by Zane Grey. Directed by Lesley  
Selander. Good Zane Grey, about a man  
who comes back to his ranch home after  
twenty years to clean up things for his  
daughter. Directed with a restraint and  
sense of how real people act that gives it  
interesting individuality. Paramount.

f OVERLAND STAGE RAIDERS—The Three Mesquiteers. Screen story by Bernard  
McConville and Edmond Kelso. Directed  
by George Sherman. Modern western, with  
motor buses and airplanes—a brisk riding-  
shooting-flying affair. John Wayne replaces  
Bob Livingstone in the law-enforcing trio.  
Republic.

f PERSONAL SECRETARY—William Gar-  
gan, Joy Hodges, Andy Devine. Screen-  
(Continued on page 22)



# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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## October Discussion Topic

A number of our readers have written expressing the hope that these discussions will continue, and so we are entering the new season with confidence that as many groups as possible will cooperate in making the discussions a success. Our topic for October is chosen mainly on account of a radio address given under the auspices of The National Board by Dr. Boris Morkovin, of the University of Southern California, which we print in this number of the magazine. Dr. Morkovin's account of his activities as Chairman of the Department of Cinematography is bound to be of interest to all groups, since no one can fail to be stirred by his suggestion that the future of the motion picture demands the full co-operation of the schools and universities with the industry in training American youth to be the movie-makers of to-morrow.

It is Dr. Morkovin's belief that cinematography, as well as the actual making of motion pictures, should be taught in schools, colleges and universities as widely as literature, the drama and music. We feel that this is a point on which many of our readers would like to voice an opinion and that the subject is one that would make well for a

debate in any group. We might phrase the question as follows:

"SHOULD THE STUDY OF THE MOTION PICTURE IN SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES OCCUPY AS IMPORTANT A PLACE AS LITERATURE, DRAMA AND MUSIC?"

This question, we feel, is one that cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. It should be discussed in all its aspects. Many, for example, may believe that the school should be the starting point for cinema study, others may feel that such instruction should begin in college; others that the cinema does not rank with its fellow arts as a study. At all events we hope that as many readers as possible will, either singly or together, work out their replies to this question and post them to the National Board of Review Magazine.

We hope to receive material enough for an article which will represent a real cross-section of our readers' opinions. And we would advise a careful preliminary reading of Dr. Morkovin's article, since it contains much material that is helpful to an interesting debate.

## The University Studies the Motion Picture

By DR. BORIS V. MORKOVIN

*Dr. Morkovin who is chairman of the Department of Cinematography of the University of Southern California and editor of "Cinema Progress" delivered this radio address under the auspices of the National Board of Review over Station WNYC on August 23rd.*

I BELIEVE the motion picture to be the most powerful instrument of the mental and emotional life of the 20th Century, and this belief has led me to devote my

whole life to research, teaching and writing on the ways in which mass emotions may be controlled by the movies. We may say that in the movies there are two main channels through which the attention of the public may be absorbed and held. One, is by means of the subject matter, ideas and characters of the story, providing that these are sympathetic to the public's nerve of interest at the time they are presented. I call this the social-psychological channel of the control of the emotions. The other channel of control is the elaborate cinematic and dramatic technique employed in the making and producing of motion picture stories. This technico-artistic channel guides the attention, subconsciously playing upon the public's emotions as upon the keyboard of a piano, and raising them to a height of supreme emotional tension which is relieved only at the climax.

Needless to say, most people do not analyze motion pictures as closely as this. They think of them as a matter of entertainment and not as a Sunday school. Otherwise our theatres would be empty. The fact that people enjoy pictures as entertainment is the most powerful element in the motion picture. It means that they touch and vibrate not simply coldly and intellectually, but emotionally. The sense and instinct of rhythm, humor, curiosity and drama combine to affect the whole personality of the spectator. At the same time, we must not imagine that the poor man, who can afford few luxuries in life, visits the theatre once or twice a week simply for empty, silly amusement. Many motion pictures, while giving pleasure, leave some lasting impressions in the minds and personalities of the audience. In fact I would say that the motion picture is gradually becoming an entertaining and popular University for the study of life—a medium through which any man may study human relations, feelings, and reactions to every possible situation, not only of today, but of the past and the future as well. The life of the average person is limited by long hours of routine and specialized work, and by lack of opportunity to make interesting human contacts. Motion pictures not only provide relaxation from this monotonous routine with its heavy responsibilities and worries, but they estab-

lish an invaluable contact between the whole audience and the outside world. In every country they are instrumental in affecting the average man's emotions, imagination and desires, and in spreading new ideas, new attitudes, fashions and tastes. One of the vital realities of cultural and social life, they are a safety-valve for the hectic and stupifying civilization of our big cities, and I believe that without the movies the people would degenerate through lack of proper emotional and mental nourishment. I believe that the movies are as important as literature and the other arts and should be taught as such in schools.

As I see it, there are three major objectives in the study of motion pictures in schools. First, to teach appreciation, just as one teaches appreciation of art, music, literature or drama. By elevating the standards of appreciation among youths and adults we will create a demand for better pictures and thus cooperate in the advancement of a highly important national industry. At the same time the elevation of the standard of appreciation will influence the mental and emotional progress of the people, because the whole nation is a customer of motion pictures. In short, the influence of the motion picture upon the nation's creative existence is so great as to demand the most careful attention and study.

The second objective of study courses in the schools is to make use of motion pictures as a rich source of information covering all walks of life and all fields of human endeavor. The teachers of English, of fine arts, history, science and other subjects can stimulate the presenting of their material by referring their students to carefully selected pictures shown in the neighborhood theatres. Moreover, children need the guidance of teachers and parents to get their bearings in the confusing mass of material and complexities of human experience presented on the screen. Sending unprepared, uncritical children to the movies is like throwing a person who does not know how to swim into the water and expecting him to learn while he is splashing and choking. New criteria and standards should be consciously developed for this new art of the 20th Century, which, while it combines something of all the other arts, is at the same time different



from them, and so requires a different understanding.

My third point is a professional one. This nation is vitally concerned with the future progress of one of its greatest and most important industries and in maintaining world supremacy in that field. But the knowledge demanded from a movie maker is so complex that it is ridiculous to expect that a person could become a great writer, director, cameraman, or any other important human factor in the movies, simply by being given some brief experience in a studio or by picking up odd fragments of information from reading or talking with people. In short, it is clear that the future success of the movie industry depends upon the fresh blood of a talented younger generation, fitted to continue the work of the pioneers. This thought was foremost in my mind when I started the first courses in cinematography at the University of Southern California in 1928, and later developed them into a special Department of Cinematography. With the result that today a student at the University of Southern California can graduate in cinematography. Two years of upper division work in cinematography is required for a Bachelor of Arts degree in Cinematography and an additional year or 3 semesters for Master of Arts. Perhaps you remember that my University gave Walt Disney the honorary degree of Master of Arts in Cinematography a short while ago. This was not simply a matter of recognition for a great master in the art of cinema, it was also a feeling of appreciation to Walt for what he personally gave me as one of his disciples. Because I worked with him in his studio for five years I know by experience the tremendous value of such an opportunity to learn.

I feel that the gates of the studios should be thrown open to the genius of American youth. Well-prepared, talented young people should be given a chance and a trial by the industry, so that the coming generation in the making of motion pictures will utilize all the knowledge and experience of the pioneers and will elevate the industry to unheard of heights.

As to the other two objectives I mentioned, namely, the teaching of motion pictures in order to elevate standards of taste

and as an aid to education—our object here is to teach the teachers. We set out to train those who wish to give instructive courses in the motion picture and audio-visual education for junior colleges, high schools, professional schools, and even elementary schools. There is a spreading vogue for teaching appreciation of motion pictures in schools, or for talking about them in clubs. Now this is a highly important development, but unfortunately teachers who practice it in an unscientific and unsystematic way are useless and even harmful to their students and audiences, because their ignorance or superficial knowledge may compromise the whole movement. So, because we believe such teachers to be a danger, we have established special summer and winter courses for the training of teachers. Just as we expect the teacher of music or the fine arts to have a thorough knowledge of the media involved and to have had some experience in using these arts, so do we consider it very necessary for the motion picture teacher to learn how to handle the elementary instruments of picture-making. In the cinema workshops, teachers and students produce short 16 and 35mm. experimental pictures of educational or documentary value. Last year, three of our students received prizes awarded in the International Contest of the American Society of Cinematography. We are building up a reference library as a background to this study.

Besides our elementary and advanced production classes there are more specialized classes, such as Story and Continuity, Art Directing, Sound, Music in Films, Cutting and Editing, Directing, Education Films, Social and Psychological Aspect of Motion Pictures, Distribution and Exhibition of Motion Pictures and others.

Technicians, artists and executives with vision collaborate with our classes and experimental work. Louis B. Mayer, Darryl Zanuck and many others from the field of production, as well as the Skouras brothers from the list of exhibitors, are, to mention but a few, dealing with us regarding the type of preparation and training they desire for future experts and executives. There are several projects in discussion in connection with apprenticeship to be given to the most

*(Continued on page 22)*

## Some Aspects of Direction

By ALFRED HITCHCOCK

*From a radio address "The Making of a Melodrama" delivered under the auspices of the National Board of Review over Station WNYC on July 12th. Mr. Hitchcock is well known here as the director of "The Thirty-nine Steps", "Secret Agent" and other famous British melodramas. His latest production is "The Lady Vanishes."*

### *The Script*

MANY people imagine that the director's work begins in the studio and is confined to handling the actors. In my case this is not true: before I go into the studio I like to have the whole film complete in my mind. I like to have the whole story down, shot by shot, on paper, and this means working a lot on the script before I even enter the studio. The preliminary steps are something like this.

First, when I've got my story I like to strip it right down to the bone—just take the essentials and write them down so they only cover about a single sheet of paper. When I have made the picture I like to feel that if a man in the audience is asked what it's about he will describe it just as I did on this one sheet. That is the beginning. Next comes the forming of the pattern the picture's going to take. I have a hand in this, treating the essential ideas in a way which I feel is suited to the film medium and planning out the course the script should take. Now, the writers get to work, filling out the completed plan. This is usually a two month's job and is a highly important stage to which a full understanding of the general plan is essential to all the writers. For example, as soon as the plan of the first sequence is written out it must be shown and explained carefully to the dialog writer so that he can feel exactly the mood of speech required. And so, gradually, with all the writing units cooperating with each other, the full story is completed.

But there is still another step to come before shooting begins: when the treatment is on paper and the dialog added, the whole script must be cut up into individual shots. When this has been done I feel the worst is over. I have an exact plan of operation and

can go straight ahead putting it into celluloid. But cooperation between the writers must come first; they must be willing to discuss and reject their own material when necessary and help to be part of a single unit. Personally, I prefer writers without reputations; I find them more agreeable to changes in their work and willing to learn. An established writer often thinks his way must be best, or imagines there is no difference between writing a novel or play and writing for the movies. He forgets that the problems and situations of the stage are very different from those of the screen. These differences are best illustrated, I think, by analyzing an actual sequence in a movie, so I would like to take the first sequence of my picture "*Secret Agent*" as an example.

I had to begin this picture by telling the audience that it was war-time, and that the British Foreign Office wanted to use a young lieutenant as a spy in the Eastern war zone. So they pretended the lieutenant had been killed in France, and secretly brought him to London to give him his orders. Now if I had told these facts in a screen caption, in a form of a dialog, or shown the young lieutenant arriving alive from France, the result would have been pretty dull. So instead I began the film with a close-up of a coffin. The coffin stands in a darkened room, covered by a British flag, and immediately creates a mood of total solemnity. This mood is deepened as the camera starts to move backwards, very slowly, almost as though it were on tip-toe itself, and the audience sees four tall candles burning at the corners of the coffin, and then the assembled mourners. When this scene has had time to sink in, the mourners slowly file out of the room until only one person is left behind—the one-armed servant, who reverently closes the big doors when the room is empty. Then, left alone, he fumbles for a cigarette, slips it in his mouth and lights it from one of the candles. This lack of reverence is enough to change the mood of the audience from tragedy to suspicion. Then the servant goes up to the coffin, snatches off the flag and



tries to pull the coffin off its stand. It is too heavy and clumsy for his one arm; it falls, and the lid flies off. The coffin is empty! The servant turns away and looks disgustedly at the portrait of a young man on the wall. After the group picture of the mourners, the camera has been brought up close to the one-armed man. Now it shifts to the portrait on which he is gazing. Slowly the head in the portrait fades, and I cut to the same head on the shoulders of a very much alive young man who is sitting in a London office being given his orders for work as a spy. A little dialog, a shot of newspaper headlines announcing trouble in the East and the audience knows exactly what has happened, who the young man is, and where he is going. A mood of mystery has been created at once; the audience gets the idea of what is going on, and is receptive to further impressions.

In addition to the technical facts and treatment of the situation described above, you may notice another thing—that the audience has been let in on the secret of the agent's identity from the start. When I can I like to do this. I think it adds greatly to the excitement if the audience is let into a secret. They know all about it, but they know many of the people on the screen don't know, and that is what gets them excited. Even a small thing like the title of a film can matter tremendously in this respect. Take "*Mutiny on the Bounty*". The audience knows there is going to be a mutiny. They see the story develop, they watch Charles Laughton flogging his men, and much of their excitement is in waiting for the mutiny that they know must come and of which Laughton knows nothing. Think what they would have missed if the film had been called "Boys of the Bounty", or "Rovers of the South Seas". Yes, share your secrets with the audiences and they will pay interest on them.

#### *Director and Actor*

One should always give one's audience every chance to know and understand the characters they are looking at, so they can feel what's coming and grasp what's happening. Not, of course, by obvious tricks, but by getting good actors who know how to express a mood or intention with the slightest gesture or change of expression, like

Peter Lorre. This is the way to make your characters stand out effectively. I like an actor to play a part for which his personal experience in life has raised him. In this way he does not have to resort to cheap mannerisms and unnatural movements. The best actors are those who can be effective even when they are not doing anything. Understatement is priceless, and that is why I make melodramas, because they lend themselves so admirably to understatement.

To get back to the actors, however. A director can help a lot by taking care of his actors' physical positions. For example, suppose a man's enemy enters through a door. If the director has put the actor in an easy chair facing the door it will be more difficult for him to register antagonism than if he had been caught while straining towards an ashtray to stub out a cigarette, or groping for a collar stud under the bed. Or if he is chatting carelessly to a friend with a smile on his face, it is easier for his feelings to be expressed by the sudden vanishing of that smile than it is if he starts registering theatrical terror. It is more true to life and it is more believable. These physical details, no matter how small, are so much a part of life that they can be used with vivid force. It is exciting to show a cop running at top-notch speed to catch a crook, but it is still more exciting if the audience discovers the cop's got asthma! It brings another doubtful element into the chase. It is more natural than his tripping over a fire-plug. And the sound picture has greatly increased our ability to register such details.

#### *The Use of Sound in the Film*

I believe that there should always be sound effects of some kind throughout the whole film. I don't mean constant talk, but sound. I have found that if you drop your sound effects suddenly, the picture tends to drop with it; it seems to break the continuity. But your sounds should always be as natural as possible; for example, I think we all agree that music and dialog do not go together. It is not a natural combination. Nor do I like the toning down of sound to suit the convenience of the story—say a factory scene, when the roar of the machines is faded out so that the young man can be

heard making wisecracks more distinctly. That is not natural either. Another thing to avoid is using dramatic sound in a scene which is already charged with as much drama as it can hold. It does not increase the drama—it lessens it. No, on the whole I think the chief value of such sound effects lies in giving point to a situation. Some years ago I made a picture called *Blackmail*. A girl committed a murder with a knife, ran home as fast as she could, crept upstairs to change her clothes and came down to breakfast with the family as though nothing had happened. While she eats, a talkative old woman comes to the door and gossips outside about the murder. "Such a horrible thing" she says, "and done with a knife too", "it's just not British to kill people with a knife . . . something only a foreigner would do . . . no it's not like using a brick or something British like that, a knife isn't." And as she chatters away the camera turns on the girl in the room, hearing the mutter of words come through the door with just the word "*knife*" ringing out at the end of every mumbled sentence. And then suddenly the voice of her father, clear and loud across the table: "Pass me the bread-knife, Alice, dear" as the final shock, and the camera remorselessly showing it in his hands cutting through the new loaf. I think this example gives a pretty clear idea of what I mean—of how careful use of sound can help strengthen the intensity of a situation.

## Book Week

THE annual fall observance of Book Week, calling special attention to books is this year marking its twentieth anniversary. Almost as old in years of appearance is Selected Book-Films, compiled by the National Board of Review in connection with Book Week, for the 1938 list is the 17th annual.

This list includes films adapted from novels and published plays, films with book value tie-up, and foreign films with book value tie-up, which have been selected by the Review Committees of the National Board of Review for the family and juvenile audi-

ences, from Oct. 1937 to Oct. 1938. Listing these films the Board is in keeping with the thought of Book Week which puts its accent on Youth—youth in search of recreation and instruction—learning of New Worlds, and this learning comes from both books and films which give enjoyment and education.

The Selected Book-Films list can be secured from the National Board of Review for 10c. And other publications and details can be secured from Book Week Headquarters, 62 West 45th Street, New York City.

Since Book Week is November 13th to 19th, now is the time for councils, junior councils, schools, libraries, and other interested groups to prepare their plans.

## 25 Years of the Y.M.C.A. Motion Picture Bureau

ANOTHER still older anniversary of interest to users of motion pictures is that of the Motion Picture Bureau of the National Council, Y.M.C.A. which this 1938-39 season marks its twenty-fifth year of service, with a special Silver Anniversary edition of its Selected Motion Pictures. This catalog has proven exceedingly helpful through the years as a source of information on non-theatrical films. The present edition includes hundreds of 16mm silent and sound films, available by rental or free for transportation and its convenient subject arrangement adds to its service.

The National Board of Review is particularly pleased to bring this anniversary catalog to the attention of its readers, as Mr. George J. Zehrung, Director of the Bureau, in spite of his administrative duties there, has given much thought and time to the work of the Board as a member of its Executive Committee since 1923.

The Catalog can be secured by addressing Mr. Zehrung at the Y.M.C.A. Motion Picture Bureau, 347 Madison Avenue, New York City or by writing to the Chicago office at 19 South LaSalle Street. The film service is by no means confined to the Y.M.C.A. but is available to schools, churches, societies, and other community organizations.



## Making a Cartoon

THE editors have decided that it might be of interest to Motion Picture Councils and other groups to publish from time to time the complete scripts of selected broadcasts given under the auspices of the National Board over the New York City Station WNYC. The purpose of publishing these scripts in the Magazine is to assist any groups who may be considering making similar broadcasts over their local stations. The following script is an example of a light, but instructive talk on an aspect of movie-making that demands cheerful treatment—namely, the animated cartoon. The authors are Jack Mercer, director of dialog, and Thomas Moore, animator, both of the Fleischer Studios. The letters in the margin indicate the speakers' first names. Speaking time: 15 minutes.

\* \* \*

ANNOUNCER: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, this is the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures continuing its series of forums on various aspects of motion pictures. In response to a number of requests for a discussion of short and full length cartoons, we have pleasure in presenting this evening two speakers from the studio of Max Fleischer. From this studio come Pop-eye the Sailor, the man who has made young America spinach-conscious, and many other cartoon celebrities. The two speakers are Mr. Thomas Moore, one of the Fleischer studio's animators, and Mr. Jack Mercer, the director of dialog. If any of you imagine that an animator is an instrument for registering electrical discharges, Mr. Moore will put you right and give a real account of the importance of an animator's work in the drawing and painting of a cartoon. Mr. Mercer hasn't got much to say about this side of cartoon making, but he's going to show you who's behind the strange sounds and chatter that accompany the characters in a cartoon. So now I'll turn the forum over to them and let them handle it in their own way. Will you lead off, Mr. Mercer, or would you like me to start things going with a few questions?

- J. Mr. Announcer, this might be a little irregular, but I wonder if you would do me a favor by allowing me to be the interviewer this evening. I've always wanted to put Mr. Moore on the spot.
- A. Surely, go ahead, the mike is yours.
- J. Good evening, Mr. Moore.
- T. Hello, Jack, what are you doing here?
- J. I'm going to be the interviewer, so just assume that I know nothing at all about the making of cartoons.
- T. What do you mean—assume?
- J. I walked into that. Well, on with the interview. I'm sure everyone is interested in animated cartoons. Will you tell us something of their history?
- T. Thomas Edison experimented with the idea of animated drawings as early as 1900, but the first man to make an animated cartoon film was the great cartoonist, Windsor McCay. The idea struck him as he observed his young son flipping the pages of a book of "Magic Pictures." After many months of extensive study, he made an animated version of his cartoon strip, "Little Nemo in Slumber Land." But he considered this film only an experiment and in 1909, two years after his first attempt, he made the first film for exhibition, "Gertie, the Dinosaur." Prior to 1922, most animated cartoons were made with paper cut-outs and were pretty crude.
- J. You mean sorta like cutting out paper dolls, eh?
- T. Yes, exactly. You should know. The drawings of the characters in different positions were cut-out and pasted over a simple background and then photographed in sequence. But since that time many improvements have been made, so that today we have the full length feature cartoon.
- J. A great many people seem to think that the full length cartoon involves a different and more complicated process of production.
- T. The only real difference is a matter of length, the feature being much longer permits the story to be told with more finesse and detail. The average short

requires about 10,000 drawings and takes approximately seven minutes to be shown on the screen, while the full-length feature requires more than a quarter-million drawings and runs over an hour.

- J. There certainly has been a great advance made in the industry. Why don't you tell our listeners how the work on a modern cartoon begins?
- T. Gladly. The modern studio is a beehive of activity, highly systematized.
- J. In simple language you mean they do a lot of work.
- T. It takes over 230 artists and technicians at least ten weeks to prepare the drawings which make up an animated movie cartoon. Work on the cartoon begins when the musical director and scenario writers call into conference a few of the head artist animators. (J. ad. lib. "Tell 'em I'm in the Story Dept.") They discuss the general lines of the plot and principal gags. (J. ad. lib.) The music which is to be adapted to the plot is selected. By the way, Jack, you are in the story department. I'm sure you could explain just how your department functions.
- J. Huh? Oh. To be sure. To be sure. Well, the first thing we do is try to get an idea or facsimile—
- T. (taking up) And after getting the idea of synopsis, the story men write a script in complete form for the animators. In order to do this they must know all the cartoon characters intimately—how they think and how they react. They must know the limitations imposed upon them by the censors, by the audiences, and by the technicalities of production. In other words, a certain subject might be condoned by one country and barred by another. One community might be flattered by an incident that would insult the next. You may like a picture that I thought dull and boring. So, if the script can please some of the people part of the time, then the job is well-done.
- J. Then the story goes to the Animation Department—and that's how we write stories.
- T. Very good, Jack. The head animator, upon receiving a new story, visualizes the picture and roughly lays it out il-

lustrating each scene. He then calls his group together for a conference, when, through analysis and discussion, they try to get into the mood of the story. The scenes are then divided amongst the group and they start to work. And that is where the fun begins. If you unexpectedly walked in on a group of animators at work, you would probably be amazed at what you saw. For the chances are, you would find one chap standing in front of a full-size mirror gesticulating wildly and making horrible faces at himself. Another on roller skates in the center of the room would be trying to act like Olive Oyl, while a couple of his colleagues offer helpful suggestions such as:—"Tom, try that fall again, only this time throw your feet higher so that when you land your weight is more concentrated in one spot. We want to see how high you bounce."

The survivors then sit at their desks and attempt to draw on paper what they saw. An animator never knows what he may be called on to draw next. It might range from a pigmy wedding ceremony to a Giant ball game.

- J. Personally, I'm a Brooklyn fan.
- T. You would be. . . .
- J. I resemble that!
- T. At this point, I would like to make an observation. In order to be an animator, one must be slightly wacky.
- J. You should make a very successful animator, Mr. Moore.
- T. Thank you so much. But drawing is not the only phase of the animator's work, for he must give complete instructions to each department as to the handling of his scene. He is director, actor, technician.
- J. And wacky.
- T. The animator does not make every drawing, for that would take up too much of his time. He only makes the extremes, or key drawings, and then an assistant, or "in-betweeners," completes the scene. For instance, if he wants to animate an apple falling from a tree, he makes one drawing of the apple as it starts to fall and another at the end of the fall. The in-betweeners then make the drawings



that will carry the apple from one position to the other. The animator regulates the speed of the fall by indicating the number of drawings that must be made between the two positions. When the animator starts his scene of the apple falling, he first makes a rough drawing or layout to serve as a guide to the Background Department, for every action has to take place in a proper setting or location. With this guide the background artists make a detailed and carefully rendered water-color drawing of the scene.

J. And that completes the work on the picture.

T. No, the picture is far from being completed after the animators have done their job, and an enormous volume of technical work is necessary before the "shooting", or photography, can take place.

In the Inking Department, each drawing is traced on transparent celluloids. This work plays a very important part in the general scheme of preparing for the camera.

J. Oh, then the drawings are ready for photographing?

T. No. The Coloring Department now receives the celluloids together with the corresponding animators' drawings. The Colorers, or Opaquers, fill in all the blank spaces between the ink lines with paint of various shades. All colors and shades are used for the purpose. This process is highly technical and the task is very arduous, but very important; as only a perfectly colored set of drawings will result in clear and perfect photography.

J. Well, how do you photograph these individual drawings so that they will appear to move?

T. The photographing process for cartoons is essentially the same as in regular moving pictures. The same type of camera catches the progressive movements of the cartoon character, recording each successive movement. The difference between the regular and the cartoon camera is only in the speed of operation. When filming a regular moving picture, the camera runs 90 feet of film per minute.

Not so the cartoon camera, where individual drawings are being photographed. The work here proceeds very slowly because of the time spent by the operator for removing the photographed drawing and then assembling and adjusting the celluloids for the next photograph. One foot of film may take a whole hour to photograph, and the camera, instead of photographing 90 feet a minute, as in the case of the regular moving picture, may take a whole day to photograph 30 feet of cartoon film.

J. Now, we come to the process which plays so great a part in making moving pictures today, and especially cartoons. The application of sound is called "Sound Synchronization."

T. That's right. In the spacious projection room the sound director, vocal artists, and the effects men face the screen. They watch the running film, harmonizing the voices and sound effects while the picture is being projected. Microphones in effective positions in the recording room pick up and carry the sound over wires to a sound-proof room, where wax and film records are made. The recording thus made is called a "take" and the film record is called a "sound track." The picture is projected on the screen a second time while the wax record is "played back." The directors now get the result of their first synchronized effort, pick the flaws and make the necessary corrections for the second "take" to follow. This procedure may be repeated again and again until a perfect or satisfactory "take" is accomplished, after which the "played back" wax record is discarded. The film "sound track" is then developed and transferred to the picture film. This is called the finished negative from which the prints are made. Any number of prints can be made from a single negative. The animated cartoon is now ready for general distribution. (Pause) Jack, Jack, oh Jack, wake up!

J. (ad lib.) Where am I?

T. Now suppose I ask you a few questions for a change.

J. Why, for sure, for sure.

T. Inasmuch as you are in the Sound De-

partment as well as the Story Department, perhaps you will demonstrate for us how you make some of the sounds.

- J. I would be glad to.  
 T. Then suppose you give us your interpretation of a chicken.  
 J. Chicken? Mm-mm. . . (gives imitation)  
 T. I think that one layed an egg.  
 J. How is this for a cow? (gives imitation)  
 T. Mm—Strictly off the cob.  
 J. Well, you should enjoy this one. It's a pig that gets caught in the fence. The farmer saws into the fence and the pig is freed. (gives imitation)  
 T. The pig was very natural.  
 J. If you don't like those imitations, let us see what you can do.  
 T. Oh, it's easy. Why I can imitate three different dogs.  
 J. All right, go ahead.  
 T. This one is the Mexican Chu-wa-wa. (gives imitation)  
 J. Uh-huh.  
 T. Next, the whippet. (Repeats same imitation)  
 J. Oh, that's the whippet, eh?  
 T. And this one will be the Dalmatian Bloodhound. (Repeats same imitation)  
 J. Oh, those were three different dogs, eh? I must admit that was pretty good. Suppose we team up and do a cat and dog fight. You do the three dogs and I'll do the cat.  
 J. & T. Ad. lib.  
 T. And now we will close with our theme song.  
 J. & T. Ad. lib.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you for that moving little song, Mr. Moore and Mr. Mercer. We'll have to break it up now, I'm afraid, and I should like to apologize to our listeners for having allowed this instructive discussion to degenerate into a common cat and dog fight. At the same time I'm sure everybody who was with us tonight got a good idea of what goes into the making of cartoons and their sound accompaniment—to say nothing of the kind of people who make them. I think "wacky" was the word, Mr. Mercer . . . ? (Mercer: An animal raspberry) If you listeners agree with me and have ideas of your own regarding entertaining and

instructive subjects for a film forum, please drop a postcard to Film Forum, care of this station, WNYC, at the Municipal Building, or write direct to the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures, 70 Fifth Avenue, New York City, and make any suggestions or criticisms you may wish. We'll be with you again next week, same time, and in the meanwhile this is the National Board of Review saying so long—and see you at the movies.

## A Newsreel to be Viewed 5000 Years Hence

**A**N archaeological newsreel—a message from today to audiences of A.D. 6939—has just been completed by RKO-Pathe Pictures. The newsreel, along with other records and objects representative of the present era, has been buried deep in the earth on the site of the New York World's Fair 1938, in the 5000-year Westinghouse Time Capsule. And when future historians dig the Time Capsule out, they will find not only the newsreel, but complete instructions for building a projection machine with which to view it. If they succeed in matching the machines of 1938, the newsreel will run about fifteen minutes, and the audience will view in succession the following twentieth century scenes:

President Roosevelt speaking at Gettysburg on July 3, 1938, the 75th anniversary of the battle; Howard Hughes, leaving New York and returning from his epochal round-the-world flight; Jesse Owen winning the 100-meter finals at the 1936 Olympic Games; the 1936 Harvard-Yale football game in the Bowl, New Haven; the All-Star baseball game at Crosley Field, Cincinnati, in July, 1938; the United States Pacific Fleet at maneuvers in March, 1938; Soviets celebrating International Labor Day in Red Square, Moscow, in May 1938; manoeuvres of tanks and other mechanized units of the United States Army at Fort Benning, Ga., in June, 1938; scenes from the bombing of Canton,

(Continued on page 21)



# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS DEPARTMENT

*This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of Exceptional and Honorable*

*Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.*

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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## Sing You Sinners

*Produced and directed by Wesley Ruggles. Story and screenplay by Claude Binyon. Music and lyrics by Hoagy Carmichael, Frank Loesser, James V. Monaco and John Burke. Boris Morros, musical director. Photographed by Karl Struss. Distributed by Paramount.*

### The Cast

Joe Beebe	Bing Crosby
David Beebe	Fred MacMurray
Mike Beebe	Donald O'Connor
Mrs. Beebe	Elizabeth Patterson
Martha	Ellen Drew
Harry Ringmer	John Gallaudet
Pete	William Haade
Filter	Paul White
Lecturer	Irving Bacon
Race Track Fan	Tom Dugan
Night Club Manager	Herbert Corthell

THE chances have always been that if, somehow, a Bing Crosby picture ever turned out to be more than a handy hook for a cliché, a closeup and a clinch to the tune of variations on "Love in Bloom", it'd be just too bad. Because the Crosby fans, with a dozen odd (and I mean *odd*) epics under their belts might not recognize a good picture if they saw one, and hardly anyone else would take the trouble to find it out.

Well, it has happened, quietly and without any fanfare. *Sing You Sinners* is so unobtrusively excellent that an awful lot of people aren't going to know it, and a whole lot more will automatically classify it as another family affair and let it go at that; but you can't do that. It's so much more. There are very, very few pictures we can look back upon and call them 100% American, in the sense that they truly represent any part of middle class America today. Some have claimed to do it—but of how many films could you sincerely say: "that might have

happened to me!" . . . ? The glittering musicals, the flashy dramas and the glamor girls and boys aren't the only phonys, by any means. There's every bit as much falseness about too many of our homespun films and characters who must show the straw sticking out of their ears.

In theory, at least, the Beebes are something like the Joneses and the Hardys we all know: there is Mother Beebe and her three boys, Dave, Joe and little Mike, whom she has brought up to sing and play quite well; they sing in church and get an occasional engagement at a local nitery. Not the kind where talent scouts from New York lurk behind potted plants or impresarios pop out from ambush. Dave has a small auto repair shop and he wants to get married, but being the breadwinner he can't, until Joe gets a job, and Joe is having much too much fun singing his way through life. Naturally, they have their quarrels, and at long last Joe gets a job, which he loses after a few hours. They are all so miserable, he decides to pull up his stakes and go to the city, make his fortune, send for mother and Mike and leave Dave a clear field with the house and his Martha.

It's as simple as all that . . . and the beauty of the film is the natural, effortless way it progresses logically from sequence to sequence at an unhurried but never slow pace, building in carefully cut episodes to a surprisingly logical and life-like conclusion, instead of starting off at a whirlwind clip, as some of our "series" pictures do, increasing their speed and falling flat and winded along about the third reel, out of breath, words and situations.

It is like that from the wholly charming

*Donald O'Connor,  
Bing Crosby and  
Fred MacMurray  
as the three  
brothers in  
"Sing You Sinners"*



and completely cinematic moment the Beebe family come down their porch steps and meet us face to face, one by one, on their way to church until, in the small, smoky little club that isn't too prosperous, the boys harmonize the last lilting chord of "I've Got a Pocketful of Dreams" and smile a happy goodbye. And between these two extremes is as fine a blending of the best that an intelligent camera has to offer: no bizarre situations, too cleverly turned phrases, dramatic declamations, unrequited loves, spectacular musical settings.

Joe Beebe just goes from one not very tragic blunder to another not too funny mistake, and the awkward, comfortable little Beebe kitchen could never make the rear pages of *House Beautiful* or be handsome enough for Myrna Loy's temporary poverty. In a completely three-dimensional way the Beebes are sometimes at a loss for word and gesture, depending upon the situa-

tion, and Mother Beebe seldom looks as if she yearns to mother a suffering world. They behave as we all do to such an extent that their authentic simplicity is likely to be taken for the drab and commonplace by audiences educated to gauge values by size and sex. Nobody ever seems to be playing for all he is worth, either in the colorless little church where people sing off key, on the race track where everybody is too excited and jumpy to remember they are movie extras, or when the Beebe boys come to grips with the race track gamblers, which is really some tussle. None of this One Blow Joe stuff. You feel the impact of it like the referee who stepped in at the wrong time.

This is Wesley Ruggles' first claim to directorial importance since, perhaps, *Cimarron* and it will be hard to equal, harder to surpass. It is also Bing Crosby's first acting performance and a delightful surprise he is. Elizabeth Patterson is even better than she



has been before and Donald O'Connor the most promising little boy we have seen for too long.

You probably won't be conscious of any of it because all of it is so good, or realize

that it is so completely American in exactly the way we would want an American story and an American picture to be, if we could have thought of it.

*Rated Exceptional.*

J. A. McA.



*Pierre Fresnay and Eric von Stroheim, the enemy officers in "Grand Illusion"*

## Grand Illusion

*Written by Jean Renoir and Charles Spaak, directed by Jean Renoir, photographed by Charles Renoir, music by Joseph Kosme, sets by Lourie. Produced by R. A. C., released by World Pictures Corp.*

### *The Cast*

Marechal ..... Jean Gabin  
DeBoeldieu ..... Pierre Fresnay  
Von Rauffenstein ..... Eric von Stroheim  
Rosenthal ..... Dalia  
Peasant woman ..... Dita Parlo  
An actor ..... Carette  
A Surveyor ..... Gaston Modot  
A soldier ..... Georges Peclet  
A teacher ..... Edouard Daste

FOR three years, now, France has been sending a fine film over to us each fall.

This one is about French prisoners of war in German prison camps, and it's as apparently aimless as life (or war)—about which there are such great illusions: and it's one of those few, out-of-the-ordinary films that has most in it for those who bring most to it.

What plot action there is, of the usual kind, concerns the capture of some French soldiers—three in particular, of different official grades—and their attempts to escape, for which they are transferred from one camp to another, and almost as an after-

thought after two of them have got away, something like a bit of love story, in a widowed German peasant woman's house where the two hide for a time. In the end these two get into Switzerland, safe from the enemy, and Marechal has promised to go back to the woman when the war is over—is that an illusion, too?

What gives unusual and even intense interest to all this is a kind of approach that isn't at all movie-like, freshness in observation and understanding, and a curiously detached yet sympathetic absorption in what people are without forming conclusions or judgments about them. There is plenty of passion in the characters, restrained characteristically though it be in each one, and a completely dispassionate way of presenting them. It is surprising that such detached treatment should create so successfully so much muted horror and calm but profound pity.

It's a kind of war picture one is not accustomed to, without battles or hatred: rather the cogs in the machinery of war, infinitesimal cogs obscurely pursuing their automatic existence, with the inextinguishable humanity in them still functioning stubbornly amid the dreariest of war's horrors, the dirty mechanical day-to-day continuance of being merely alive. But this keeping alive, with all the vital quirks and humors and egoisms that persist so indomitably so long as the individual survives, save the film from being unspeakably depressing: warm and quicken and lighten it, rather, not in Pollyanna's way but with a kind of depth that increases respect for the human spirit.

It's a one-man film: Jean Renoir, increasing his artistic stature with every picture he makes, directed and helped write it, with another Renoir at the camera. His chief gift seems to be getting at essentials, without too much fussing about orderly plot and climax, and a supple readiness to use uncliché details to illuminate his people and his action. And he has a just about perfect cast to help him: Gabin, Fresnay, von Stroheim, Dalio, who each manage, in what we see them do and hear them say, to put over the unseen and unheard things that from their background and inner selves make them what they are. And Dita Parlo, the peasant

woman—a quiet, unostentatious but astonishingly vibrant performance.

The dialogue is in French and German, some of it translated into English subtitles. Probably little that is significant would be lost if one could not understand a word of it: the actors are so good that what they mean gets over without a literal knowledge of what they are saying.

J.S.H.

*Rated Exceptional.*

## The Edge of the World

*Written and directed by Michael Powell, photographed by Ernest Palmer, musical director Cyril Ray, choral effects by the Women of the Glasgow Orpheus Choir conducted by Hugh Robertson. A Joe Rock Production, released by Pax Films.*

### *The Cast*

#### *The Gray Family*

<i>James</i> .....	<i>Finlay Currie</i>
<i>Andrew (his son)</i> .....	<i>Nial MacGinnis</i>
<i>The Catechist</i> .....	<i>Grant Sutherland</i>
<i>The Laird</i> .....	<i>Campbell Robson</i>
<i>The Skipper</i> .....	<i>George Summers</i>

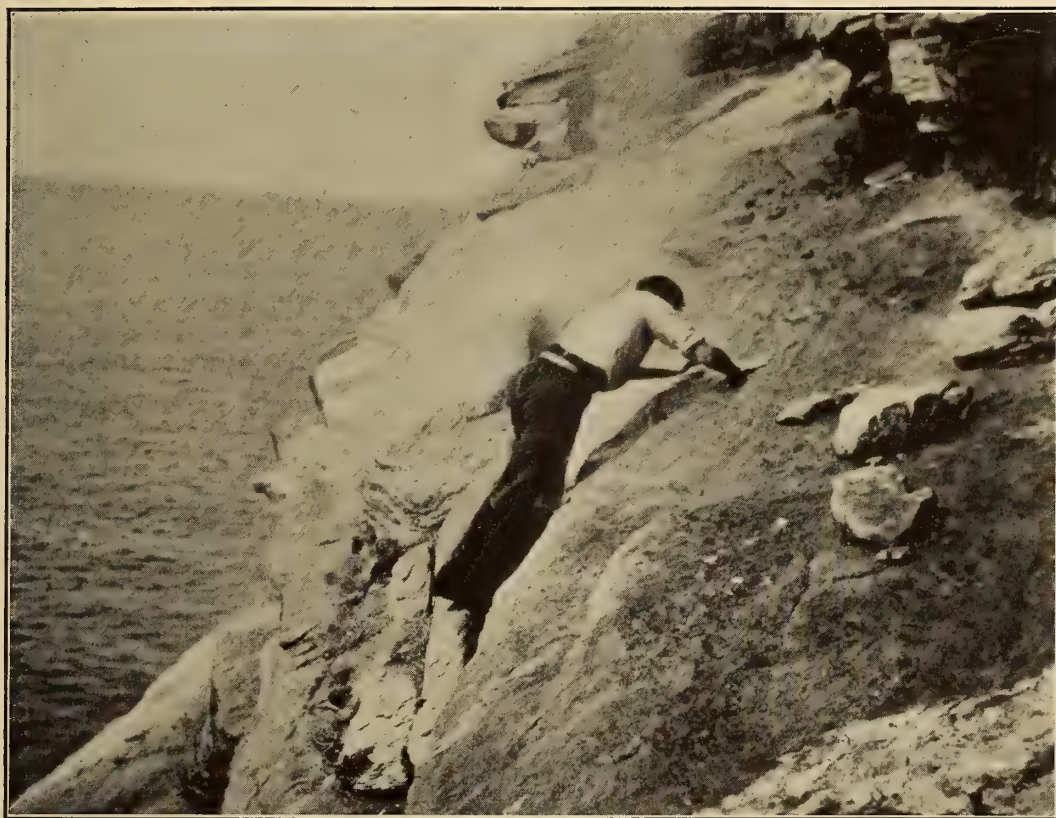
#### *The Manson Family*

<i>Peter</i> .....	<i>John Laurie</i>
<i>Ruth (his daughter)</i> .....	<i>Belle Chrystal</i>
<i>Robbie (his son)</i> .....	<i>Eric Berry</i>
<i>Jean (their grandmother)</i> .....	<i>Kitty Kerwin</i>

*And all the people of the lonely island of Foula where this story was made.*

ONE has to go back to Robert Flaherty's *Man of Aran* for a film to compare this with. *The Edge of the World* is less of a poem, less of a cinematic symphony, than *Man of Aran*, but fuller of human interest and human drama, and for all the remoteness of its setting, closer to home and a kind of people we can feel with. The Aran man, with his woman and boy, were like a first man woman and child, impersonal and symbolic, Man, set against nature, and nature was mostly wind and sea. The people of Hirta, this tiny island off Scotland, are a community and part of today's world, their struggle is not alone against primitive nature and a land getting poorer the longer they work it, but against encroaching mankind from outside, trawlers coming to ruin their fishing places, modern civilization luring their young people





*The race up the cliffs in "The Edge of the World"*

away. Bringing them still closer to us, they are not only a community against the outside world of nature and man, but a group of people in which individuals pull in different directions, personal wills and loves and prejudices working their conflicts into the common struggle.

There is something of a stock by-plot to it, a rather naïve set-up of stern father and thwarted love affair, a baby rushed to the doctor on the mainland in the nick of time, but the main story has largeness and meaning: whether these islanders shall stick it out desperately in the face of all that is against them, or leave their ancient home and move themselves and their animals to a place where life is not so hard and hopeless. For some of them this is defeat, for others a sad but sensible adjustment to change. Rooted pretty deeply in life, you

see, and not dwarfed by being compressed into movie sets, or trivialized by familiar actor-faces carrying their inevitable reminders of other screen stories. The professional actors in the cast are new persons to us, similar enough to the rugged island natives, with their vivid Gaelic strain, to seem to belong to them. And everything moves freely and naturally in a vast amplitude of out-doors; sea and cliffs and weather-bitten houses, and looming through the mist (an ancient signal of disaster) the far-away mountains of Scotland.

Here, if you don't mind calling it by that prosaic and rather depressing name, is a documentary film, but full of a meaning that documents have only when they have been powerfully dramatized and humanized into vivid life.—J.S.H.

*Rated Exceptional.*

## Critical Comment

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### Saving the Tough Kids

**B**OYS TOWN has the immense advantage of Spencer Tracy and the fact that the film pictures, however fictionized, an actual achievement, and points not merely to what might be done but to what has been done. Aside from that—but that is an incalculable lot—it's just one of the cycle about tough kids who would have grown up into gangsters if something hadn't been done about it. *The Devil is a Sissy*, one of the starters of the cycle, is still about the best, though *Dead End* was more talked about. Since then, reformatories have been exposed from Class A to Class D minus, with more melodrama than accuracy, and substitutes for reformatories explored, and the tough kid has become the screen fashion in juveniles. Only Shirley Temple and Bobby Breen remain sweet and good. Meanwhile the *Dead End* or *Crime School* kids are learning how to act, Mickey Rooney is learning how to overact, Freddie Bartholomew's voice is approaching an adolescent gruffness that may qualify him for a refined sort of toughness too, and the cycle is getting repetitious.

Probably there can't be too much repetition of the fact that slums are a great social danger and a great social responsibility, and such dangers and responsibilities are never so vividly dramatized as when children are used as the victims. So far only boys have figured in the cases the movies have been examining, which leaves quite a sizeable field still unexplored. There are girls in the slums, too, as well as all kinds of grown-ups. But a boy who is at all real is an appealing figure, and he can be made real with much less restraint than the all-round adult is restricted to, which often results in something moving and exciting on the screen, with other elements mixed into it besides mere entertainment. If the movies can crusade socially, the problem of children in the slums is one in which they are most likely to crusade effectively.

It is easy to understand, if not to justify, why most of these movies pick out gangsterism as the inevitable future for spirited youngsters growing up in slums. The gangster has become one of the most vivid symbols of adventure, particularly realistic adventure, in present-day movies, just now a villainous symbol but such a useful ingredient for a lively plot that it would be no easy job for a hard-pressed scenario-writer to think up anything half so sure-fire. Even the Russians, in their *Road to Life* that for one reason or another is often cited as top-notch among kid-saving movies, play on the gangster theme as blithely as any profit-seeking Hollywoodian. But the theme grows monotonous: who, e'er the cycle fades, will come along with a drama based, not on the negative point of not becoming a gangster, but on the positive point of becoming something else?

*Boys Town*, of course, has something definitely positive in it—the growth of Father Flanagan's town, and the infinitely human and inspiring figure that Spencer Tracy makes of Father Flanagan himself. These elements put life into a plot that leans, for its more obvious dramatic effect, on one of the tritest patterns of sentimental gangster-fictionizing, but the life they put into it lifts it only at intervals from the rut into which it is constantly falling, to tumble at the end into a very abyss of mushy melodrama. For after all the heroic efforts of the good father to start his home, and the slow but thrilling growth from one old house to a complete town, what is it that finally reforms the town's worst problem-kid? An automobile accident and a gun-fight.

Toward the end, either of *Boys Town* or of the excellent short film that has been made of the real Father Flanagan and the real Boys Town, there is a starved, ragged boy with a dog, who has heard of this place and tramped long miles, practically shoeless, in the hope of getting into it. He, of course, is taken in: that is what the place is for. What would it have been to see a boy like



him, his body and mind and spirit being fed, growing into someone with a place in the world? Can't there be as much drama in that as in being shot with a gangster's bullet?

Remembering the days when as Mickey (Himself) McGuire young Rooney, a mere infant then, infested the screen as one of the most virulent pests that movie-shorts have ever known, and seeing what he has done in the last two or three years, it is easy to believe that this youthful player has unpredictable growth in him. But it's what he did in such films as *The Devil is a Sissy* and the Andy Hardy things that give him the right to electric lights with Spencer Tracy, not what he does in *Boys Town*. Maybe it's the script, maybe the direction, but he's overdoing it.

## "Norma" Antoinette

FULLY half of *Marie Antoinette*—and if not the greatest it is certainly one of the longest pictures of all time—is filled with showing how the sweet and trusting young daughter of Maria Theresa of Austria had all her sweetness and trustfulness stifled by marriage to the wooden Dauphin of France and became, out of desperation, a hard and brilliant butterfly, dancing, flirting, dancing, with no heart in it to be sure, but oh so gallantly gay! Then, just as she was being tempted to get away from it all, on the verge of thinking she might perhaps consider the possibility of maybe listening, oh just for a comforting instant, to the honest pleadings of a handsome and platonic young count from Sweden, the old King died, and for the rest of the picture she was a devoted wife and mother, whom through no fault of her own, a villainous-looking rabble brought to a pathetic end beneath the knife of the guillotine.

That is a summary, prejudiced, perhaps, by a certain respect for history, that is no more unfair to the lengthy film that has been handsomely erected around Miss Shearer than the film itself is unfair to fact. Fidelity to fact, however, has never been the prime essential in a good historical drama. It is a bit odd, of course, to find such a devastating event as the French Revolution tossed

lightly upon the screen as a mere unhappy accident that befell a pleasant young lady just as she was settling down to cozy domesticity after a very trying time with her husband's folks, but that could be overlooked without too serious complaint if it weren't for the film's overwhelming tendency toward triviality and dullness. When two such women as Marie Antoinette and Dubarry, powers behind the throne in one of the world's most powerful countries at the most crucial time in its history, turn out to be no more exciting than a pair of dolls dressed up in a toyshop window, something has happened.

What has happened, of course, is that Marie Antoinette and all that went with her have been put to simmering in a scenario-writer's pot and then poured out as Norma Shearer, a Norma Shearer trailing such clouds of Juliet that it is sometimes hard to tell whether she is playing a Capet or a Capulet. She is the whole thing, practically without benefit of anything but gorgeous costumes and stupendous sets, and it must be said for her that she carries it off gallantly and starry-eyed, with no trace of a suspicion that she isn't doing something pretty fine. And probably she will be taken to fandom's bosom as a far, far better thing than the real Marie Antoinette could ever have been.

Robert Morley and John Barrymore, as the two Kings Louis, act as if they had sometime taken a peek into somebody's history book.

But, overshadowed as they are, they can't steal the show and hand it over to the realists.

## Summer Highlights

MOST of the outstanding films of the summer have had special notice given to them in the Board's Weekly Guide, but a brief summary of them may be useful to those who keep away from movies in the summer and want to catch up on the worth while things they have missed. To go as far back as *Holiday*, that is an old friend it is pleasant to see again. It is a strictly in-doors thing, devoted to that infinitesimal section of people in the highest money-brackets, and concerned with acquiring and

keeping great wealth, or escaping it; but it has been freshened up in its talk and people, and is bright entertainment.

*Alexander's Ragtime Band* is a treasure-chest of Irving Berlin tunes, with an ordinary but serviceable plot to string them on. Its greatest charm is for those who enjoy awakened memories, for many of the biggest popular song hits of the last thirty years are deftly brought in with unusual care for the atmosphere of the days when they were new. The songs remain so fresh and young that it would perhaps be unnatural for Alice Faye and the Power-Ameche boys to grow any older while they bridge the long time gap between pre-war "Alexander" and the most modern style of radio broadcasting. Anyway, the tunes pop in so often and so pleasantly, they leave little time to be captious about the story plot.

*Algiers* is colorful and exciting, with the perennial effectiveness of a fascinating thief being pursued by the law, and something more interesting than usual in the pursuing detective's methods. Perhaps the film will be best remembered for the first American appearance of Hedy Lamarr.

*Vivacious Lady* is completely delightful, one of those unpretentious comedies that sometimes hit on a sort of perfection without apparently having aimed at anything but being entertaining. Ginger Rogers, romantically and abruptly plunged from a night-club into the academic life of a small college, is one of the bright things of the year.

From England come two pictures that are perhaps too English to make any great general stir in America, but they show English movie making at its most native and best. *South Riding*, if it hadn't so much human interest in its characters, might do as a documentary film of the changes coming to an English countryside—as it is, its documentary values give it a solid social basis for an engrossing story of individuals whose private lives and community lives are vitally and dramatically entangled. *Three on a Week-end* is fairly alive with human crowds—not three, only, but all England, seem involved in this bank-holiday, and the memory the film leaves is not at all what the three did, but—and with remarkable vivid-

ness—something extraordinarily like an experience of one's own, as if one had actually been a part of the warm, jolly throngs that herded so promiscuously to the sea-side for a holiday outing.—J.S.H.

## "The River" Receives Foreign Recognition

THE International Cinema Exposition held annually in Venice has awarded the highest prize in the documentary classification to *The River*, the film story of the Mississippi produced by Pare Lorentz for the Farm Security Administration of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The award was given after an international jury had chosen this as the best of 71 subjects entered.

The award marks the first time that a government-sponsored American film has received international recognition, although Mr. Lorentz' first picture, *The Plow That Broke The Plains*, was entered in the preceding competition and was accorded considerable praise.

Previous documentary winners in the International Exposition have been *Mannesmann*, a German industrial film produced by UFA; *Youth of the World*, a German film of the Winter Olympics at Garmisch-Partenkirchen produced by Leni Riefenstahl; *Triumph of the Will*, a German film also produced by Leni Riefenstahl, and split prizes given to other German and Danish producers.

The Venice award is the latest in a series of honors which have been accorded this film, including the\* exceptional rating of the National Board of Review and a bronze plaque for best in its class voted in the national exhibitors' poll.

*The River* has been playing in American theaters since early in January of this year under a release through Paramount Pictures. Theatrical distribution is continuing, and it is planned to obtain release probably within two months to schools, colleges and other non-theatrical outlets in 16 mm size as a result of demand for such showings.

\*Reviewed in the National Board of Review Magazine, November 1937.



## Motion Pictures' Greatest Year

WITH September 1st as the starting date, all forces in the motion picture industry announced plans to line up behind a nationwide campaign to stimulate public awareness of the tremendous strides the screen has made and its importance in national life. This campaign, according to the committee, is to be a cumulative statement of the essential character of motion picture entertainment in the social and cultural life of the people and is intended to bring forcefully to the attention of motion picture patrons the efforts of Hollywood writers, directors, actors, and technicians in providing America with its most popular form of entertainment. Newspapers and theatres are cooperating in bringing word and plans of this national drive to all communities.

Motion Picture Councils will find in it a stimulus to new Fall activity, for the campaign is to run from September through December. Exhibitors will welcome the co-operation of the Councils in support of the drive, which is not only to stimulate theatre attendance, but to create good will and to make the public motion picture conscious. The slogan of the campaign is "Motion Pictures are Your Best Entertainment," and those in community motion picture groups who so actively give their effort to this work must agree with this statement and welcome ready-made plans which can be used in their activity.

The Movie Quiz, a feature of the campaign, is sure to interest many, for it will test the movie patron's powers of observation and in addition hold out the possibility of a substantial prize.

We had a state club motion picture chairman in our office recently who expressed interest in this and in bringing it before her chairmen and members through the club publication, so we took her to Mr. Paul Gulick, Coordinator of the Campaign Committee who gave her helpful information saying, at the same time, he would like to see all the women attacking this contest. So to those who want to attack (to use Mr. Gulick's active word) we suggest writing to him at Motion Pictures' Greatest Year, Inc.,

1270 Sixth Ave., New York, N. Y., or, since it is to be a local matter with thousands of theatres cooperating, going to the theatre manager for details of the Quiz and other plans.

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(Continued from page 12)

China, by Japanese airmen; a New York fashion show in April, 1938; a preview of the World's Fair, showing the parade of floats.

This newsreel is art of an elaborate "cross-section of civilization" contained in the Time Capsule, which has been constructed to preserve word of today for remote posterity. One of the major items is a micro-film "essay" of more than 10,000,000 words in which the art of the motion picture and of photography generally receives much attention. The entire section on the Motion Picture in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, is reproduced in the Micro-File; followed by the Radio City Music Hall program for the picture *You Can't Take It With You*, and various shots of motion picture stars.

All the film included in the Capsule, both Micro-File and newsreel, was carefully processed according to instructions furnished by the United States Bureau of Standards. For further safety, it was spooled on small hollow cores of laboratory glass, wrapped in 100 per cent rag paper and sealed in specially fabricated spun aluminum containers. And finally, the air was exhausted from the glass-lined crypt where the film and other objects were stored; and a preservative gas, nitrogen, took its place.

Archaeologists who supervised the project agree that, whatever else the people of fifty centuries hence may have, they will be sure of a good "movie."

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THOSE who deplore the lack of films available for study in various subjects may be surprised to learn that in a pamphlet entitled "A Review of Sixteen-Millimeter Films in Psychology and Allied Sciences" by L. F. Beck of the University of Oregon, there are listed three hundred and twenty-four 16mm films in psychology.

In addition to this complete film listing Mr. Beck gives other information concerning sources and subjects of value to the users of films in this specialized field.

(Continued from page 5)

talented graduates of universities, who may take post-graduate experimental work and ability tests, so that the best of them may be elected as apprentices. We look forward hopefully to the day when industry and universities unite to bring up a motion picture generation of tomorrow.

## Two Council Publications

A NUMBER of interesting publications prepared by Motion Picture Councils showing how they bring their work in printed form before the public have come to our attention during the summer.

Two we will tell you about here, as examples of different kinds of publications to serve different purposes. One is the Year Book 1938-39 of the Motion Picture Council of Dallas, Texas. The reason this Year Book is notable is because the Council was organized only in October 1937 and it proves the group is out to put themselves on record at the start. The book includes Purpose, Object, Officers, Committees and the monthly programs for the coming year, covering such subjects as The Essentials of a Good Motion Picture, Motion Pictures as Recreation, Motion Picture Influences, Motion Pictures as Universal Amusement, Picture Booking, Children's Matinees, A and B Pictures, Cartoons and Shorts, and What Constitutes a Good Motion Picture. This young Council can now be named among those others who wisely have their programs prepared far in advance and announced to the membership.

The other publication is by the Bronxville, (N. Y.) Motion Picture Council entitled "Movie Programs for Bronxville Children, What 748 Parents Think." These parents have responded to a Children's Movie Questionnaire sent to them by the Council in order "to learn what type of movie program the parents of our community desired for their children" and "to use the facts so obtained in suggesting that the Bronxville Theatre adapt its Saturday matinee to the majority view of the parents."

The result of the questionnaire as reported by the pamphlet is that the President of Skouras Theatres Corporation which owns

the Bronxville Theatre, has conferred with the Council and has gladly offered, for an experimental period, a Saturday matinee program conforming to the wishes of the majority of interested parents. Now it is put up to the public to make this experiment pay, says the publication.

Here is a thought for other Councils wanting to base their efforts in regard to children's programs on community wishes. Mr. W. H. Van Dusen is chairman of this Council and states that he or the other officers will be willing to give further information to those interested.

## For and About the Children

THE *Child Explores His World*, a 16mm 2 reel silent film, based on the work of the Brooklyn Children's Museum has been made by the Harmon Foundation. It has a special place in museum programs but also is available and interesting to clubs, civic organizations, Parent Teacher Associations, schools, churches and such groups. Details of distribution can be learned from the Harmon Foundation, 140 Nassau Street, New York.

SEVERAL short fairy tale films in color, 35mm, have been produced especially for children by the Julia Ellsworth Ford Foundation, 649 S. Olive Street, Los Angeles, California, each subject running ten minutes. The stories are based on Mrs. Ford's own books about Snickerty Nick with children as the actors. These films will be distributed free to hospitals, orphanages, parents' associations and similar groups.

## Selected Pictures Guide

(Continued from page 2)

play by Betty Laidlaw and Robert Lively. Directed by Otis Garrett. A pleasant comedy, with a very likeable cast, about a newspaper woman who tries to outwit her rival columnist by taking a job as his secretary. Universal.

f RENEGADE RANGER — George O'Brien, Tim Holt, Rita Haworth. Original screen story by Bennett Cohan. Directed by David Howard. A well-done western, with a ranger going after a girl accused of murder. RKO Radio.



f ROOM SERVICE—Marx Brothers, Donald McBride, Lucille Ball. Play by John Murray and Alex Boretz. Directed by William A. Seiter. The successful farce about a show manager's efforts to keep his company fed in a hotel without paying bills, somewhat Marxified. Funny. RKO Radio.

fj SONS OF THE LEGION—Donald O'Conner, Billy Cook, Billy Lee. Screen story by Lillie Hayward, Lewis Foster and Robert F. McGowan. Directed by James Hogan. About the organization of sons of legionnaires to learn patriotism, mixed with rather lurid melodrama. A tough little fellow with a gangster father gets a start toward useful citizenship. The kids are very good. Paramount.

f STRAIGHT, PLACE AND SHOW — Ritz Brothers, Richard Arlen, Ethel Merman, Phyllis Brooks. Based on play by Damon Runyon and Irving Caesar. Directed by David Butler. The comic adventures of the Ritz Brothers when they are given a race horse. Hilarious for fans of the nutty trio. 20th Century-Fox.

f THREE LOVES HAS NANCY — Robert Montgomery, Janet Gaynor, Franchot Tone. Original story by Lee Loeb and Mort Braus. Directed by Richard Thorpe. The adventures—practical and romantic—of a nice, homey Southern girl in New York, among the literati. Slight and pleasant, rather weighted with more acting and directorial talent than its substance justifies. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f TOO HOT TO HANDLE — Clark Gable, Myrna Loy, Walter Connolly, Walter Pidgeon. Based on story by Len Hammond. Directed by Jack Conroy. Two newsreel cameramen, working for rival companies, and rivals for a girl flyer who is searching for her brother lost in a South American jungle. Fast in action and talk, covering lots of ground and lots of exciting events. A lot of fun in it too. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f \*YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU—Lionel Barrymore, James Stewart, Jean Arthur, Edward Arnold. Screenplay by Robert Riskin from stage play by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart. Directed by Frank Capra. A triumphantly successful adaptation of the popular play, in which the rival philosophies of two families—one putting happiness above money, the other above everything—are brought into harmony by the romance between two young people. It has a sturdier outline and much more depth than the play, and the cast is ideal. Recommended for church use. Columbia.

f VALLEY OF THE GIANTS—Wayne Morris, Alan Hale, Charles Bickford, Claire Trevor. Novel by Peter B. Kyne. Directed by William Keighley. 1902—saving the California redwoods from big-money timber

slaughterers. With the excitement that comes from vigorous fist-fights, wrecked bridges and dynamited dams, it is a conventional picture of its type, touched up with technicolor. Warner Bros.

## SHORT SUBJECTS

### CARTOONS and COMEDIES

f BUZZY BOOP AT THE CONCERT—A Max Fleischer cartoon, in which a heavy operatic soprano is enlivened by Buzzy's swinging. Paramount.

fj DONALD'S GOLF GAME (Disney Cartoon)—Donald Duck plays golf with his three mischievous nephews for caddies. RKO Radio.

f GLASS SLIPPER, THE (Terrytoon Cartoon)—An irreverent and amusing version of Cinderella. Done in technicolor. 20th Century-Fox.

f MUTINY AIN'T NICE (Popeye Cartoon)—Ol' ve Oyl accidentally gets on Popeye's ship, which starts a mutiny. Paramount.

f STAGE FRIGHT—Leon Errol. Funny slapstick, in which a husband with a hangover learns something from amateur theatricals. RKO Radio.

f WOLF'S SIDE OF THE STORY, THE (Terrytoon Cartoon)—An amusing twist to the Red Ridinghood story. 20th Century-Fox.

### MUSICALS, NOVELTIES and SERIALS

fj DICK TRACY RETURNS (serial) Nos. 6-8—Directed by William Witney and John English. Dick Tracy as head of G-Men, continues his long pursuit of a man and his five sons who commit big, clever robberies. Republic.

f HOW TO READ—One of Robert Benchley's humorous bits, about avoiding eye-strain in reading. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f MILDEWEED MELODRAMA—Three old-timed short movies strung together for the unintentional laughs in them. D. W. Griffith is one of them. Paramount.

fj STREAM-LINED SWING—An amusing musical novelty. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

### INFORMATIONALS

fj CITY OF LITTLE MEN, THE (M-G-M Miniatures)—The actual Boys Town, with Father Flanagan, and how the place works, with something of its history. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f DAILY DIET OF DANGER—Some particularly hazardous feats of camera men in photographing the news, with more than usually good commentary. 20th Century-Fox.

f FISTICUFFS (Pete Smith Specialty)—Max Baer illustrates boxing technique, with Pete Smith comments. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

fj \*FOOTBALL THRILLS (Pete Smith Specialty)—Covering in fine fashion the most spectacular plays of last fall's college football games. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

fj GOING PLACES WITH LOWELL THOMAS No. 53—Springs of Silver. Florida's Silver River—its beauties and dangers attractively presented. Universal.

f GOING PLACES WITH LOWELL THOMAS No. 54—The Old South, beautiful scenes of the lovely old Southern mansions and a recreation of the gracious life of the old days. Universal.

f GOING PLACES WITH LOWELL THOMAS No. 55—Twenty-four Dollar Island, splendid views of Manhattan's towering skyscrapers; Chinchilla, California's new industry of raising these precious animals. Universal.

fj HUNTING THRILLS (Grantland Rice Sportlights)—Two young men and their canoeing adventure—mostly fishing—in Mexican waters. Paramount.

f ISLE OF PLEASURE—About Cuba, with halcyon by Lowell Thomas. 20th Century-Fox.

f MAN ON THE ROCK, THE (Historical Mysteries)—Exploring the legend that a double of Napoleon died on St. Helena instead of the deposed Emperor. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL No. 2—Life at Wellesley; Amazon activities; a show at the Bal Tabarin in Paris. Paramount.

fj PIGEON RACING—Interesting account of a pigeon race. Paramount.

f POPULAR SCIENCE No. 1—Applying permanent make-up surgically; a gadget Fred Waring invented for mixing drinks; odd hats; America's army air-ports. Paramount.

## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures is a citizen body, organized in 1909 by the People's Institute of New York City as a medium for reflecting intelligent public opinion regarding a growing art and entertainment. This is still the Board's function, together with that of disseminating information on the subject of motion pictures and carrying on a constructive program having to do with community cooperation in the advancement and uses of the motion picture.

The National Board is opposed to legal censorship and is in favor of the community better films plan of placing emphasis upon and building support for the finer and more worthwhile films. It is at all times glad to cooperate with any agency to encourage and guide the motion picture in developing its possibilities both as recreation and as entertainment.

It carries on its work through various committees. All members of the committees serve without pay. No member is connected with the motion picture industry. They are representative of varied interests and activities and many are connected with large public welfare organizations or educational institutions.

The General Committee is a body evolved out of the original group organized in 1909. It is the appeal and central advisory committee of the National Board to which policies are referred and to which decisions of the Review Committee regarding pictures may be carried either by the producers or by the Review Committee itself.

The Executive Committee is composed of members of the General Committee and is the directing body of the National Board, charged with the formulation of policies, the election of members, the expenditure of funds and supervision of all administrative affairs.

The Review Committee is a large group of 300 members carrying on the work of reviewing the films. It is divided into sub-groups which meet for review per schedule during each week in the projection rooms of the various motion picture companies.

The Membership Committee supervises the membership list of the Review Committee and recommends the names of proposed new members for consideration by the Executive Committee.

The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays is composed of critics and students of the cinema interested particularly in encouraging the artistic development of the motion picture. It reviews and publishes a critique of the finest films and assists community groups in the showing of unusual films to special audiences. Its pioneer activity has done much to lay the foundation for the Little Photoplay Theatre movement and to stimulate the organization of subscription groups to develop audiences for the support of the creative achievements of the screen.

## NATIONAL MOTION PICTURE COUNCIL

The community or field work of the National Board of Review is conducted under its National Motion Picture Council, through affiliated membership groups, service contact groups and correspondents throughout the country. The National Council assists in the organization and program of work of local groups which are usually called Councils.

These Councils follow a plan initiated by the National Board in 1916 of having a membership composed of representatives from many organizations, cultural, educational, recreational, religious, and civic, so that they typify the original movement for community participation in the development and best use of the motion picture as recreation and education.

The objectives of such organizations are as follows:

To demonstrate through the education of public opinion, the effectiveness of selection and classification, instead of censorship, as a means of forwarding the development of the motion picture and its best uses.

To encourage through open meetings, forums, classes and other means, the study of the motion picture as a medium of entertainment, education and artistic expression.

To concentrate the attention of the public on specific worthwhile films through the publication of a Photoplay Guide to the selected pictures being currently shown at local theatres.

To arrange family Friday night or week-end programs of selected films, and junior matinees of pictures particularly suited to the tastes of children, through cooperation with local exhibitors.

To endorse and further the use of visual education through motion pictures in the schools.

To arrange and promote occasional exhibitions of exceptional and cultural films that would not normally be shown in the commercial theatres.

### PUBLICATIONS

The National Board of Review and its Council as an aid to the groups carrying out these objectives furnished an informational service through its publications.

**National Board of Review Magazine (monthly)**  
\$2.00 a year for individual subscriptions  
\$1.00 a year to Council or club groups.

**Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures**  
\$2.50 a year when taken alone, available at a special rate of \$1.00 in conjunction with the Magazine.

**Selected Pictures Catalog (annual)**.....25c

**Special Film Lists** .....10c ea.

Such as Selected Films for Children's Showings, Selected Book-Films, Educational Films, etc.

**National Board of Review—Its Background, Growth and Present Status**.....free

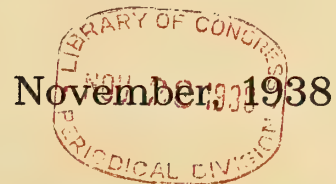
**National Board of Review—How It Works**.....free

**A Plan and a Program for Community Motion Picture Councils** .....10c



# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

Vol. XIII, No. 8



*The two young doctors awaiting the explosion in "The Citadel" (see page 15)*

*Published monthly except July, August and September  
by the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures*

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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

- f ARKANSAS TRAVELER—Bob Burns, Fay Bainter, John Beal, Jean Parker. Original story by Jack Cunningham. Directed by Alfred Santell. A picture which should be popular with all audiences: Bob Burns does a swell job as the philosophic hobo who helps to pull together a fading newspaper owned by a small-town family. Though the story is slightly incredible it supplies plenty of fun and is well cast and directed. Paramount.
- f BROTHER RAT—Wayne Morris, Eddie Albert, Priscilla Lane, Jane Wyman. Play by John Monk, Jr. and Fred F. Finklehoffe. Directed by William Keighley. A slice of life at Virginia Military Institute, the difficulties of three fellows (one secretly married) in achieving graduation. An interesting setting and an amusing picture. First National.
- f \*CITADEL, THE—See Exceptional Photo-plays Dept., page 15.
- m CLOWN MUST LAUGH, A — Richard Tauber, Steffi Duna. Based on the Opera "Pagliacci". Directed by Karl Grune. This picture is recommended simply on account of its musical qualities. Tauber and Duna play clown and Columbine with great charm in their singing and make enjoyable an otherwise amateurish picture, poorly constructed and directed. Gaumont British.
- f CRIME TAKES A HOLIDAY—Jack Holt, Marcia Ralston. Original screen story by Henry Altimus. Directed by Lewis D. Collins. Above the average crime story of a district attorney out to break racketeers.

Jack Holt does a good job and the racketeers look as real as you want. Direction and photography are perfectly competent, and lack of exaggeration in the whole production helps to make it an effective crime picture. Columbia.

- f \*DRUMS—Sabu, Raymond Massey, Roger Livesey, Valerie Hobson. Novel by A. E. W. Mason. Directed by Zoltan Korda. An unsuccessful uprising of native hill-men under a murderous and fanatical leader in the border states of India, in which the fate of a boy prince is involved with that of the English garrison. Technicolor does nobly by the colorful costumes and Indian landscapes, and the whole thing is a spirited tale of the romantic, Kiplingesque aspect of British army life. British production. United Artists.

- f FIVE OF A KIND—The Dionne Quintuplets, Jean Hersholt, Claire Trevor. Original screen story by Lou Breslow and John Patrick. Directed by Herbert I. Leeds. The "Quints", growing into active youngsters, enliven a not very original story about the rivalry between a girl and a man reporter—the little girls play with puppies, sing, dance and have a birthday party. 20th Century-Fox.

- f GARDEN OF THE MOON—Pat O'Brien, Margaret Lindsay, John Payne. Novel by Barton Brown and H. Bedford Jones. Directed by Busby Berkeley. Pat O'Brien attempts to keep world-famous orchestras in his world-famous ball room, and a young, unknown orchestra leader attempts to make a name for himself. Lively and entertaining, with a new and attractive performer named John Payne. First National.

- f GIRLS' SCHOOL—Anne Shirley, Nan Grey, Noah Beery, Jr., Ralph Bellamy. Short story by Tess Schlesinger. Directed by John Brahm. An unpretentious but very human picture of the girlish things that happened in a girls' school at the time of the senior dance—grown-up romance mingles unobtrusively with first loves, and it is all pleasantly natural. A fine script and brilliant direction. Columbia.

- f HARD TO GET—Dick Powell, Olivia de Havilland, Charles Winninger. Screen story based on original idea by Stephen Morehouse Avery. Directed by Ray Enright. A breezy comedy romance, wherein a girl sets out to get even with a man for humiliating her, and ends by chasing him. Pretty farcical but bright and entertaining. Warner Bros.

(Continued on page 21)



# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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## Two Views of Standardization

IN a recent U. S. Government report entitled "The Problems of a Changing Population"\* a small section is devoted to the motion picture and its effect upon human standardization. "At first" says the report, "the motion picture was widely regarded as making for standardization at a vulgar level; now it is often hailed as a medium of cultural advance. Perhaps the truth lies between these extremes. In any case the trend towards standardization seems to be inherent in the processes involved and the organization required for this development, though the movies may contribute something to spontaneity by offering humor, relaxation and new interests."

In subsequent passages the report deals briefly with trends and developments in the motion picture. Emphasis is laid more upon technical advances in the industry than upon development of breadth of outlook: the general tone suggests that such innovations as sound films and color photography, plus increased efficiency in the handling of plots and economy of footage, are the most significant aspects of the growth of the industry in America. Then the report goes on to say:

"One thing that the commercial cinema has almost never done is to experiment in the realm of ideas. The path established as successful is the one the industry seeks to follow. It is perhaps better that the major emphasis in film-making should continue to

be the purveying of entertainment, rather than that a conscious effort should be made to mold public opinion. Nevertheless, experiment with ideas and concepts is possible, and might be financially successful."

And, in a later paragraph:

"... In the main the movies are designed to amuse everybody and offend nobody. . . . The capture of an enormous audience is required of every film in order to defray the mounting cost of production and bring the coveted reward for the risks involved. The primary emphasis is on immediate entertainment. It is, nevertheless, reasonable to expect of the cinema some real contribution to human spontaneity, relaxation and imagination, and a measure of fidelity to the characters and events portrayed."

In short, the writers of the report expect a greater concentration on fundamental problems, to be executed with imagination and fidelity. They deal most understandingly with the motion picture companies' desire to obtain a profit in the form of box-office returns. But they keep a very discreet silence where the question of other obstacles to the development of ideas is concerned; at no time do they suggest that censorship might also be a reason why "fidelity" is often lacking and why there is not greater readiness to introduce new ideas and concepts. While they speak in very general terms of what should constitute such advances, they also make their criticisms of the industry's shortcomings from a purely financial standpoint.

\*Report of the Committee on Population Problems to the National Resources Committee. For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D.C. Price, 75 cents.

It is obvious from the films cited in other sections of the report that the writers based their conclusions on pictures that were produced a number of years ago. Social themes have been handled much more boldly in recent times. But, on the whole, it cannot be said that censorship has made the slightest attempt to meet the movies half-way, nor ever to consider the public except as a sensitive, helpless suckling who can only take what mother orders. Hence it is very welcome news to find one of the industry's most important stars stating what was left unsaid in the Government report in a most outspoken and laudable manner.

Speaking at The Herald-Tribune Forum in New York City, Miss Katharine Hepburn asked for co-operative effort on the part of all groups and individuals to remove hampering and unfair censorship. Though—in common with the writers of the report—she praised the industry for the good job it had made of presenting literary classics on the screen, she came out with definite feeling on the treatment of contemporary material. "For some reason or other" (we quote from the Herald-Tribune account) "we are not touchy about the political, moral and economic problems of our grandfathers' day—with the possible exception of the Constitution. We can talk about them honestly and simply without hurting anyone's feelings. We can face the past with a clear conscience and allow our children to do the same."

"However, let a movie try to depict situations in which we are all involved now; let a movie try to wake people up to their own plight and suggest a way out; let a movie try to present a moral, economic or political problem of today honestly and simply, and they are advised to hear nothing, say nothing, do nothing. They are sent scurrying back to the shelves to revamp the old story of boy-meets-girl. We are all creatures of habit. If we are fed on innocuous platitudes we do not develop mentally or morally. Is it wise that such an important instrument of public enlightenment be stifled?"

This is the other side of the medal, and the side that should be studied along with the financial aspect in any subsequent report on problems of a changing population.

## National Board Annual Conference

THE National Board of Review will hold its annual Conference in New York City February 2nd to 4th at the Hotel Pennsylvania. Word of the program will come to you later but this notice of the dates is given so you can make plans well in advance to attend. We welcome any ideas or suggestions.

## Do You Want Suggestions?

AN Outline of Activity for Motion Picture Councils and Film Study groups has recently been compiled by the National Council of the National Board of Review containing four pages of suggestions and will be sent to you if you request it. Also available is a new listing of publications and services of the Board. We welcome your request for these and your correspondence asking for assistance in your programs or telling of your activities.

## Junior Study Clubs

THE National Board of Review junior motion picture groups, called 4-Star Clubs, are well started on the new season. As most readers of the Magazine know, these clubs are formed in elementary and high schools, community houses, libraries, etc., throughout the country for the study of the motion picture—a most important activity since it seeks to encourage the juniors to select the best that this popular form of entertainment offers. A sample of the clubs' publication, the 4-STAR FINAL, will gladly be sent to those Councils who are interested in forming a junior study group or in affiliating a club already formed with this National Association of 4-Star Clubs.



# Making a Biographical Film

By ALBERT S. HOWSON

*From a radio address presented over New York City Station WNYC under the auspices of the National Board of Review "Film Forum." Mr. Howson is Scenario Editor of Warner Bros. Pictures, Inc.*

THE preliminary research work in connection with the making of a biographical film takes months, and sometimes years, for it must be exhaustive to the last minute detail. All available sources of information are combed for authentic data.

In preparing *The Story of Louis Pasteur*, everything ever written about the famous scientist was read and re-read. Dr. Lissauer, the head of Warner Bros. Research Department, gathered all the pictorial material available; photographs of the architecture, costuming and properties were gathered, together with authentic portraits of the actual people with whom Pasteur came in contact.

As each piece of this photographic material was acquired, it was put into a folder, known in the vernacular of the studio as "the bible". In the last analysis there were between 800 and 1000 photographs.

Upon completion, this file was distributed among the associate producer, the writers and the director. The architectural photographs going to the art director; the pictures of properties to the property department; the pictures of costumes to the wardrobe department, and the character pictures to the casting director, as a help to him in selecting actors and actresses resembling the originals most nearly.

The same procedure was followed in the preparation of *The Life of Emile Zola*. Everything ever written about him was gathered and perused most carefully, and in addition, Zola's own writings were read and re-read in order that the spirit and color of the period might be accurate.

In the case of *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, not only were all the old legends read and digested, but every modern version of the story of Sir Robin of Locksley, as well. Nor was the problem simply one of discov-

ering material concerning Robin Hood; there was also the fact that authorities have never completely agreed as to who Robin really was. The first mention we were able to find of him is in the poem "Piers Plowman", written as early as 1377, and after that date many mystical elements were added to the story, particularly in Elizabethan times. It has even been suggested that Robin was simply a forest elf, called Robin Hood because the elves wore hoods and were always up to some mischief. But the most persistent of all the stories is the one which depicts Robin as the leader of a band of Saxons, fighting the tyranny of the Normans and helping the oppressed. This, as you know, is the story we finally adapted for the screen.

Nor did our difficulties end with Robin himself. There were the habits and customs of his time to be studied—details which make the difference between accuracy and guess-work in a picture. We found, for example, that in those days the whole family in a feudal castle got up at five in the morning, went to church until six o'clock, then had their breakfast and went back to church again. At nine in the morning they settled down to their dinner—the chief meal of the day—and then went to business, which meant hunting. By five o'clock they were back for supper, and to bed by nine; most of them undressing in pitch darkness and cold, because there was practically no light or heat in the castle. Also there was no such thing as glass in England at that time, and parchment and scraped deerskins were used to let a little light into the house and keep the cold out. Even the individuals in the picture presented their own special problems. Prince John, we discovered, was a strict vegetarian and teetotaler. But after diligent research we were unable to find out if the greatest man of them all—King Richard the Lion Heart—was able to read and write. Most of the commoners and nobles were unable to do either, and that is why details on the existence and adven-

tures of a person like Robin Hood are so hard to establish today.

At the present time Warner Bros. is preparing a picturization of the story of "Maximilian, Carlotta and Juarez". All books on the subject in English, German and French have been gathered and we have also secured data originally written in Spanish, and never before obtainable. When it is impossible to buy actual volumes of these books, photostatic copies are made in the libraries of New York, London, Paris or Berlin. When we started research on Juarez, we acquired from Professor Dossick in New York, who was preparing to write a biography of Juarez, all the material that he had collected on the subject over a period of many years. This material was of immense value. Valuable research material was found in the French publication "L'Illustration", and English illustrated magazines of the period. It took twelve months to gather this material on Juarez, and since the completion of that work, writers have been busy for five months preparing what is known to the industry as "a shooting script", and have not yet finished their task.

The research on *The Story of Louis Pasteur*, *The Life of Emile Zola* and *Robin Hood* required more than six months for each subject.

I am often asked on what basis we select certain historical characters for personalities in our screen-plays. The character of Louis Pasteur was selected mainly for the reason that prior to the Warner production, the life of no great scientist had ever been depicted on the screen, and the story of Louis Pasteur, from a dramatic viewpoint, was considered especially well suited for motion picture purposes, offering as it did the theme of a great man, fighting for humanity.

After the success of *The Story of Louis Pasteur*, with Paul Muni, the next logical character for him to portray seemed to be Emile Zola. Here we had not only a famous figure in literature fighting his own cause, but fighting the cause of justice, righteousness and truth, in the championing of Alfred Dreyfuss.

In the selection of personalities for ex-

ploitation in biographical films, it is essential that the lives of those selected have contained incidents that stir the emotions, and have been sufficiently dramatic to be audience compelling. It is also desirable that a lesson be learned from them by the people of today.

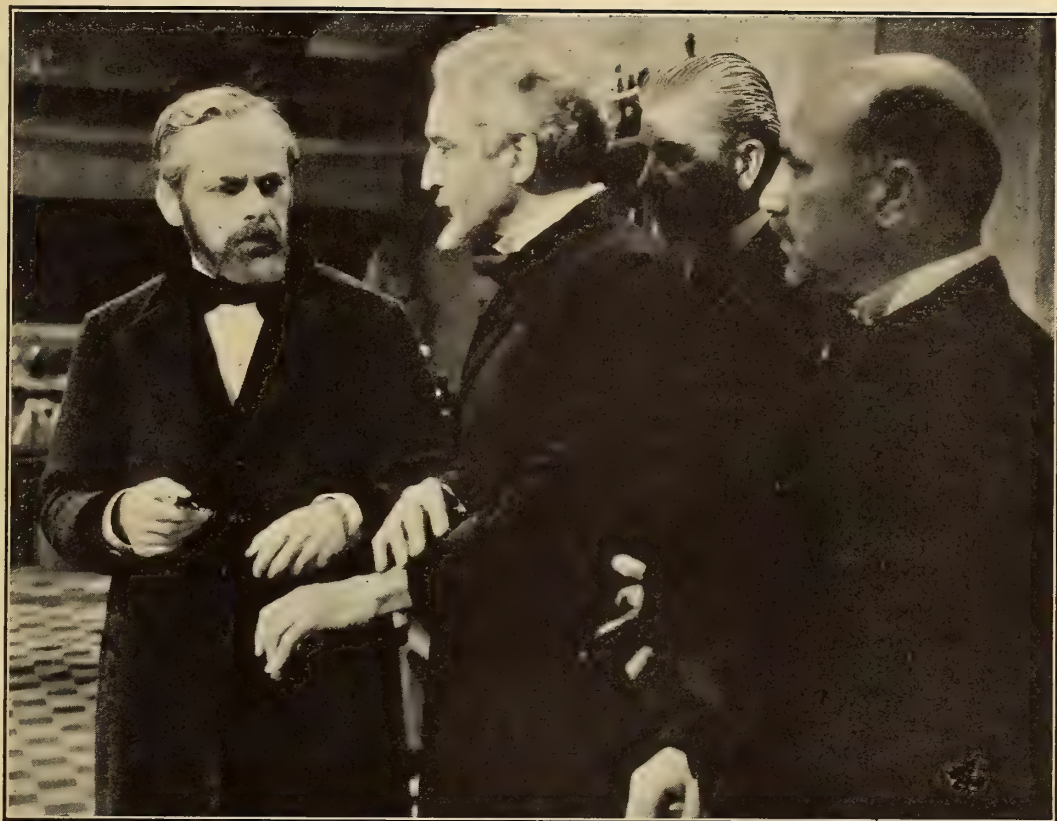
This latter thought is illustrated by the concluding speech of Pasteur in the film of that name. He says: "You young men, doctors and scientists of the future, do not let yourselves be tainted by a barren scepticism, nor discouraged by the sadness of certain hours that creep over nations. Do not become angry at your opponents, for no scientific theory has ever been accepted without opposition! Live in the serene peace of libraries and laboratories. Say to yourselves first: "What have I done for my instruction?" and as you gradually advance; "What am I accomplishing?" until the time comes when you may have the immense happiness of thinking that you have contributed in some way to the welfare and progress of mankind."

Our firm feels that its task in producing biographical pictures is to humanize these "heroes" as far as possible, and not let them remain in the category of figures in a wax museum. I believe that in the screen portrayals of Pasteur and Zola that task has been accomplished.

There is an interesting sidelight on the two productions that I have just mentioned. In actuality, there was a rather striking resemblance between Pasteur and Zola. For the production of "Pasteur", Paul Muni grew his own beard. When it came to making "Zola" he found that if he again grew his own beard, he was going to look exactly like Pasteur, and although he would also have looked very much like Zola, there would have been little or no differentiation between the appearance of the two characters; so for "Zola" Mr. Muni wore an artificial beard!

A question that always seems to provoke a storm of argument is whether or not a producer should follow historical facts with absolute accuracy when he makes a biographical film. My own opinion is that in dramatizing the lives of famous men it is not always feasible to adhere 100% to the





*The bearded Paul Muni in "The Story of Louis Pasteur"*

historical facts. The fundamental purpose is to heighten the interest and to give the public entertainment. This is what we call "dramatic license", and it has been employed almost invariably by dramatists in treating historic subjects. Take for example Shakespeare's writings. There are many discrepancies between his treatment of historic figures and incidents, and the actual facts.

In our picture of Zola's life, Zola wrote and published his famous book "Nana" *before* the war of 1870-71, whereas *actually* "Nana" was not written and published until *after* that event. This was necessary for story development. Furthermore, in actuality, Mrs. Dreyfuss was *not* the person who went to Zola and pleaded with him to espouse the cause of her husband. The purpose of our having her do so in the picture was, of course, to heighten the dramatic effect. Contrary to our picture, Zola did *not* die the night before the re-

habilitation of Dreyfuss. In reality, years elapsed between the two episodes. Again we were considering the dramatic values.

Such changes, however, are not obvious to the general public, and are known only by the very small minority who may have made an intensive study of the characters in question. We have never falsified the subjects of our biographies, or their accomplishments, but merely re-arranged facts for dramatic purposes.

Finally, I would like to touch on another point which seems to interest a great many people—the response of the public to biographical pictures. We have received comments from people all over the world on *The Story of Louis Pasteur* and *The Life of Emile Zola*, and it is surprising that there has been no criticism whatever of the "liberties" that have been taken, but only the highest praise for having endeavored to

*(Continued on page 14)*

## Making The March of Time

*This is the second complete radio broadcast to be published by the National Board of Review Magazine. It may be studied by groups interested in arranging broadcasts about the motion picture over their local stations. It was delivered over Station WNYC on August 30th by Jack Glenn, Jimmy Shute, and Jack Bradford, members of March of Time's New York Staff. Announcer: Jack Mitchell, of the National Board of Review.*

A=Announcer

D=Director

C=Cutter

SW=Scriptwriter

**A** NNOUNCER: Millions of people are familiar with the monthly movie feature, the *March of Time*. They know that each new issue brings to the screen the exciting, realistic, true life story of the world's news, in dramatic form.

What most of us don't know, however, is how it works—how the *March of Time* is prepared for the nation's theatregoers every month. Since it differs from the ordinary newsreels, we're going to take you now behind the scenes and learn what goes on. (Introduction of Jack Glenn, director, Jimmy Shute, script-writer, and Jack Bradford, film cutter.)

A—Mr. Glenn, would you tell me just what it is that makes the *March of Time* so much different from an ordinary newsreel? The *March of Time* shoots news events, doesn't it?

D—Of course we do, Mr. Mitchell, but there is a great deal more to it than that. Where the ordinary newsreel photographs only brief glimpses, or highspots, of the week's news, plucked out of their background, the *March of Time* films the complete story of a news event—the background, the motivating causes, and all the connecting factors that lie behind it. Or to put it another way, in a newsreel you are seeing only the headlines of the world's news, while we present a feature story on the subject, dramatic and complete.

A—I see; could you give me an example?

D—Yes; in one of our recent issues, dealing with the reorganization of the U. S. merchant marine, we told the public the inside story of the causes that lay behind the

present unfortunate situation confronting American shipping. Newsreels at the time handled the subject with only a few scanty shots of Chairman Joseph Kennedy outlining his report on the Maritime Commission. Not content with such an isolated event as that, the *March of Time* delved into the turbulent history of U. S. shipping, sent cameramen aboard freighters for actual pictures of shipboard conditions, interviews with sailors themselves, and pieced together the complete story behind the findings of the Commission. These they showed to the public in a dramatic and entertaining style.



Left to right, Jack Bradford, Jack Mitchell, Jack Glenn, Jimmy Shute broadcasting.

A—When you tackle a controversial subject, Mr. Glenn, what is *March of Time's* editorial policy?

D—Impartiality, Mr. Mitchell. It is the *March of Time's* policy to present the news in pictorial form, clear, coherent, and unprejudiced. We handled the extremely provocative subject of socialized medicine



two months ago in our film, "Men of Medicine—1938". Here, you may remember, we took you behind the scenes in the career of a typical young doctor, pointed out in dramatic fashion the many factors that go into his medical education, and then explained the facts on both sides of the controversial subject that occupies so much of the nation's news today—whether the government should take over the medical profession. In this film we presented the contrasting views of the American Medical Association, the Group Health Association, Cooperative Medicine, and the U. S. Public Health Service.

A—Yes, that picture was heartily endorsed by leading medical authorities and life insurance companies everywhere. Tell me, Mr. Glenn, was that a professional actor who played the part of Dr. Gibson, the typical doctor?

D—No, indeed. The man who played the main role in that picture is an actual young doctor who went through all the stages of medical training that are shown in the film. *March of Time's* characters, instead of being actors are always natural people, leading natural lives.

A—That's very interesting. Another question I wanted to ask you is this, how about the background material for a subject? When news breaks, how do you manage to have pictures of the events connected with it right on hand?

D—In our business, we have to anticipate news; we are kept constantly in touch with every part of the world's newsfront through the facilities of TIME, Inc., with over four hundred special correspondents scattered all over the globe. In addition to the services of the United Press and the Associated Press, we also maintain foreign offices in London and Paris, and our editors are always on the alert for signs of news in the future. Cameramen are sent to likely spots at once to secure background material, so that if the big news breaks, we can release an issue on short notice from the film we have already prepared. For example, we had a camera crew in Ethiopia months before the first Italian soldiers commenced their invasion. And there are two

of our men from the London office in Palestine now, so that we will have material for a Near East story if the situation becomes worse. We often shoot as much as 40,000 feet for a single picture. . . .

C—Excuse me for interrupting, Jack, but I know better. I personally supervised the cutting of our last three pictures, and the footage totaled over fifty thousand feet for each one.

D—Well, you ought to know, Jack; this is Mr. Jack Bradford in charge of our film cutting.

A—How do you do, Mr. Bradford; I suppose your job is to take the best scenes out of this vast amount of film and splice them together?

C—Yes, that's part of it. If we had never cut anything out of the film we shot on the subject, "Men of Medicine—1938", for example, it would have run on the screen for ten hours without interruption. As it was, we had to boil it down to a mere 2,000 feet, lasting only twenty minutes.

A—That means plenty of scenes went on the cutting room floor, doesn't it?

C—No, Mr. Mitchell; that's a popular superstition about the movies that is absolutely wrong. Every section of film we cut out is carefully hung up in strips for future reference, and kept in cans cloth-lined to prevent scratching. Good film is too expensive to throw away, and in our business, we never know when we may want to use a certain scene in another picture. Stored in our film library are thousands of feet of film that we can draw on instantly for background material should a new story demand it.

A—I see now how the *March of Time* differs from the newsreels, all right, by going back and dramatizing the story of what went on before an event happened; but there's one thing that has me baffled. How do you always manage to have your cameramen on the spot to get pictures of the little known events that lead up to the main news story? I should think that sometimes, in spite of all your elaborate precautions for anticipating the news, an unexpected event would happen far from the lens of any camera? Has this ever occurred?

D—Quite often, Mr. Mitchell; and when it does, we resort to a unique device that has been largely responsible for the *March of Time's* success; we reenact that particular event before our own cameras, taking meticulous care to see that every phase of the original event is duplicated with complete accuracy. Whenever possible, we use the original persons, asking them to repeat their speeches and their actions, for our cameramen to record, just as it originally happened. We have done this with such men as John L. Lewis, Mayor La Guardia, and others. If it is absolutely impossible to secure the same people, we use substitutes that are absolutely authentic. Each detail of the event is checked and rechecked by a staff of research workers so as to insure authenticity. For example, in filming the career of Thomas E. Dewey, we were faced with the problem of securing motion pictures dealing with racket busting and courtroom trials that never had been photographed. We gathered together all the actual data from our news sources, reconstructed the various situations to the last detail, and made our pictures. The result was that thirty million people were treated to a pictorial eyewitness account of important events that the newsreel could never have shown.

A—I see; did the idea of reenacting events originate with the *March of Time* newsreel?

D—No; it had been a fundamental part of the *March of Time* on the air for several years, but it was Louis de Rochemont, *March of Time's* producer, who first thought of applying the same technique to the motion picture. With this device, it is possible to give the public what the newsreel failed to give them—namely, the whole story in complete and coherent form from beginning to end, not just a brief glimpse of a few events.

A—How did the *March of Time* actually start?

D—For a long time, while working in the newsreel field, Louis de Rochemont had been thinking of some means of revitalizing the newsreel, which he felt lacked punch, and was colorless. For it was prepared without any producers, and it left the public unsatis-

fied because it was incomplete. Noticing the success of the *March of Time* radio program using reenacted events, Louis saw no reason why the same technique would not apply equally as well to the screen. He took his idea to Roy Larsen, then vice-president of *Time* magazine, who had been also thinking along the same lines. The two conferred, worked together during many long months of experimentation, and in February, 1935, the first actual edition of the *March of Time* appeared on the screens of four hundred theatres throughout the United States. Today, it is shown in 13,784 theatres throughout the world.

A—Could you give me a rough idea of how an issue is produced?

D—Well, in the first week of production, the entire editorial staff, including directors and scriptwriters, hold conferences with Mr. de Rochemont, the producer. From these discussions emerges a subject, and a tentative script is written—but here I think I'd better turn you over to our chief scriptwriter, Jimmy Shute.

SW—Thanks, Jack. After we have written a rough draft of the story for the coming issue, the cameramen are sent into the field to get backbone pictures as outlined in the script. "Into the field" may mean anywhere from Alaska to Key West, while Europe is covered by men from our London and Paris offices. As soon as the necessary pictures have been taken, they are rushed back to the New York studios, developed in a few hours, and the released rushes are shown to the editorial staff in our projection room. Very often we find that the actual photography has uncovered important new angles of the story which were not even included in the script, necessitating drastic changes and in some cases complete revision in favor of the fresher news turned up by the camera's on-the-spot reporting.

Throughout the third week the camera crew send in more material of a detailed nature as the story begins to take shape, and the script is revised again and again, incorporating last minute reports that continue to pour in through our many news channels.

C—And in the cutting room we have our hands full too, sorting, rearranging, and



splicing the miles of film that keep flowing in as the deadline draws nearer. During the last week the lights are never turned out in the *March of Time's* offices, as the editors switch different parts of the story around to emphasize a new angle, an important new fact.

SW—And don't think the script is pronounced finished until the last minute before it must be recorded either. Our lights burn nightly also as new material continues to be run off in the projection room bringing new changes to every story.

D—We directors are also on the run during the final stages of production, when the discovery of a new angle may call for filming a whole scene in a few short hours; or bad weather may have held up our outdoor shots until it becomes a race against time to get them done in time for the finished picture.

SW—Yes, I guess we'll all agree that the *March of Time* is no place for a restful vacation during the last week of production. Finally, after the film has been cut and recut many times, after the script has been written, revised, and rewritten to fit the picture, and each statement carefully checked for accuracy by the researchers, we move into the final stage of production; the conversion from a series of silent movie sequences into a carefully edited, dramatically presented screen account of the world's news.

A—How is this done, boys?

D—First, each word of script must be carefully checked against each foot of film, and then the crisp, clear-cut Voice of Time, explaining the picture is recorded on the film. This is carefully mixed with the natural sound, and the dialogue, and then all three are blended against an appropriate background of music to make the finished picture. The result is a twenty-minute reel, portraying once a month the memorable news stories of the world—presenting them not as brief camera records of the past, but as live, dramatic events that unfold on the screen as they actually took place. Through the *March of Time*, the public becomes eye witnesses to the making of world history.

## Films and Education

AMERICAN Education Week is observed November 6th to 12th and it is thus timely to include a number of items regarding educational films and the use of films in education in this issue of our Magazine.

The Association of School Film Libraries, Inc., has been formed, according to the announcement, as a non-profit organization of educational institutions and non-commercial distributors of educational motion pictures, sponsored by the General Education Board, a Rockefeller foundation, and directed at cooperative encouragement of the use of the moving film in education. The Association program which we have heard described by the Executive Director, Fanning Hearon, is extensive but plans are laid to progress slowly and surely, not so much supplying films and information at first but rather acquiring wide information upon which to build the ground work for the later program of service.

"Teaching with Motion Pictures" a guide to sources of information and materials by Mary E. Townes has just been published by Columbia University as Teachers College Library Contributions, No. 1. It is a compact twenty page pamphlet listing many sources of information on The Educational Film as a Teaching Aid; The Theatrical Film as an Educational Force and Making Motion Pictures in the School. It will be helpful to Film Councils and Film Study class leaders as well as to teachers.

A volume replete with information in the field of visual education is the "Proceedings and Addresses of the Eighth Session National Conference on Visual Education and Film Exhibition and Year Book of Visual Education." It contains in full the many talks delivered at the Conference and information about the numerous films shown at the Conference of this year and the two preceding years. Among the speakers were many educators who outlined various visual educational activities in their universities and schools. The place of the community Motion Picture Council in visual education interest was not overlooked

(Continued on page 20)

# Social and Propaganda Films

By LANGDON W. POST

*From a radio address delivered under the auspices of the National Board of Review "Film Forum" over Station WNYC on July 19th. Mr. Post was movie critic of the New York "Evening World" and former Tenement House Commissioner of New York City.*

THE word propaganda has been so distorted that it is now in the minds of some an expression of opprobrium. If someone wishes to discredit the efforts of others to put over an idea, he usually characterizes these efforts as propaganda, thereby apparently relegating them to the realm of lies and misstatements. As I understand the word propaganda it is merely the expression of ideas disseminated through various mediums. In literature these ideas may take the form of novels, poetry, history, essays or pamphlets. The theatre is another medium for the expression of ideas and the dissemination of theories. The artist is often one of the most effective of all propagandists; such a one is de Rivera of Mexico, and more particularly cartoonists such as Thomas Nast, Raemeker, Bairnsfather and Rollin Kirby. Art, from time immemorial has been used as a means of propaganda; art in all its forms. In fact it is the only method by which great movements have spread. From the very early beginnings of Christianity, to the present day, the church has spread its doctrine and established its foundations through the medium of propaganda. Why, then, should we eliminate the 20th Century's gift to art, namely the movie, from the role which the other arts have always played? Not only do I believe that the screen is a suitable place for propaganda, but I contend that the very advantages which the movie has over other forms of art in reaching masses of people, places upon the motion picture industry an *obligation* deliberately to enter the field of propaganda.

Here, perhaps, I had better explain that when I say propaganda I mean controversy. Some people prefer to change the word propaganda to "educational campaign" but I always feel that is petty—even dishonest. I believe that people feed most contentedly

on controversial matters. Controversy is the one real mental stimulant upon which we exist. For the movies to attempt to eliminate this stimulant would be to sound their death knell. Controversy is often the best and highest form of entertainment and the motion picture and the theatre are best equipped to dramatize it. As a matter of fact, I question whether the motion picture industry could possibly eliminate propaganda even if it tried to. There is not a picture that could be conceived of, or produced, that would not in one way or another contain matter which could be found controversial among certain people.

Call it by whatever name you will, propaganda or "educational campaign", make it obvious and direct, or subtle and indirect, propaganda has its place on the screen as well as on the stage, or in literature, or on canvas. If it is done well, people will go to it, if it is done badly they will not. The so-called propaganda picture should be judged in the same manner as any other picture, namely, by its value as entertainment. If people don't like it, or don't like its message, they probably will list it as propaganda. If they do like it and do agree with its message they may say "Well, maybe it is propaganda, but it's a good picture anyway." And there will always be those who will say "Sure it's propaganda, so what! It's good isn't it?" Not only would I give the screen the same freedom as the other forms of art, I would even suggest that the screen attempt to surpass the other arts in freedom of expression.

I believe that a start in this direction has already been made, that pictures with valuable propaganda have already been produced and left an impression upon the public. Certain pictures come to my mind which can certainly be interpreted as propaganda pictures, some of them *frankly* propaganda, with the definite intention of either educating people or establishing a point of view. Others have been more indirect, carrying their message in the background but never-



theless containing a definite message. *What Price Glory*, was one of the most successful pictures ever filmed; and yet it stands as one of the finest pieces of propaganda against war ever written. The film *Dead End* was a dramatic story of the lives of boys in the slums; written primarily for entertainment it nevertheless represents some of the best propaganda that has ever been disseminated against the evils, tragedies and inhumanity of the slums of our large cities. This picture was followed by *Boy of the Streets*, which again stands as good propaganda. These pictures might be said to represent the indirect method of propaganda, and probably the most successful method that we have. They combine entertainment with education. They appeal to the emotions as well as the reason. They serve a dual purpose and by so doing they add much prestige to the oft condemned motion picture industry.

The other type of picture, namely, the one that goes directly to its purpose, appealing rather more to the reason than to emotion, often fails to convince because of its lack of drama. However, two such recent pictures as *The River*, and *The Plow That Broke the Plains*, both produced by the federal government, contain drama and poetry which, together with superb photography, tell a story without a plot which has held thousands of audiences literally spellbound. These two pictures were propaganda pure and simple, and they have both enriched the prestige of the screen and taught the American people the tragic results of uncontrolled exploitation of the soil and of our forests and rivers. Mention should also be made, I think, of *Potemkin*, a most dramatic and forceful picture produced by the Russian government. Or the monthly issues of *The March of Time* which often deal with highly controversial subjects, although not necessarily taking sides. Surely no one who has seen any of these pictures can resent the fact that they serve as propaganda.

I suppose there are some people whom we might call suspicious of propaganda, but it is my opinion that such people are either unintelligent or intolerant, and I am sure they are the people who would try to dif-

ferentiate between education and propaganda, accepting the former when they agreed with it and the latter when they disagreed. A propaganda picture such as *Fury*, which was an attack on lynching, would be received with great favor in the North and frowned upon to some extent in the South. The Russian pictures, glorifying the blessings of communism, are condemned by certain people in this country with the same fervor that our pictures telling the story of the glories of capitalism are condemned in Russia. I frankly feel that the Russian pictures are a valuable asset to our life, as would be our pictures in Russia if they were permitted to be shown. *Snow White* was banned in Rumania, thus denying to the millions of people in that country one of the greatest pieces of artistry ever to come out of Hollywood. We say that that is silly, and yet there are many people in this country who would like to deny to the American people some of the Russian pictures which have been acknowledged as fine productions. We often fail to see the value in getting the other fellows' points of view even though we may not agree with them. The American public today is becoming more and more interested in economic, social and political problems. The tragic consequences of dictatorships abroad, of military oligarchies, of tyranny and subjugation have brought to us a consciousness of the importance of preserving our form of society. The accumulated tragedies of the exploitation and abuse of our economic and political system in the past, have made the people realize the importance of taking a personal interest in the operation of our system. The dependence which we have come to feel upon our government has made us more socially and politically minded. We have an awakened social conscience, and a new philosophy of living.

I do not wish to imply that the public wants to feed on nothing but propaganda. But the public is prepared to accept propaganda, always assuming of course that it is also art, and if it is true that motion picture industry is desirous of giving the public what it wants, then it need not fear about including propaganda in its menu. As a matter of fact I am inclined to think the

public would be more suspicious of an industry which consciously side stepped propaganda than of one which frankly and honestly accepted it. I am sure that when people see a picture in which the producer has spent most of his energy in sitting on the fence, they go away thinking how much more they would have enjoyed themselves if the producer had had the courage to tell an honest story. People fight for a cause and if you eliminate the cause you almost eliminate the reason for the picture.

It is, of course, a simple matter for me who has nothing to risk to say what sort of pictures should be made. However, I do feel as competent as the average individual to say what I think the public wants and this, after all, is the formula upon which the motion picture industry operates. The public in general wants strong stuff. I don't mean dirty, smutty or obscene pictures, but pictures that have a punch, pictures which carry conviction and do not mince ideas or wince at causes. This is the sort of attitude which I think the motion picture industry should adopt. It will of course get much criticism. Because it reaches many more people than the other arts, it will feel the furies of intolerance. It may even go through troublesome financial times, but until it is willing to throw aside compromise, to ignore the wishes and prejudices of the minority and to give the public as a whole what the public really wants it will never be an art in the true sense of the word. There are many difficulties facing the industry which are not of their own making, this we must realize. Silly, unjustified censorship laws which exist in many states will fight strongly against such freedom of expression. The motion picture company which hews to a straight line, producing that which is honest and free from compromise will have to deny itself the privilege of exhibiting in many of our most populous states. Whether it can do this and produce for a profit I do not know, but I am frank to say until it can the motion picture will remain a business primarily and an art parasitically and only by accident will we have great pictures. It may be that the profit system will always confine the soul of the motion picture. I hope not, for I still believe in that system.

## New York's First Motion Picture Showing

THE first public showing of a motion picture in New York City was commemorated recently in connection with Motion Picture's Greatest Year, by the placing of a plaque at the R. H. Macy & Co. store, which stands on the site of the old Koster & Bial's Music Hall at 34th Street and Broadway. The first motion picture was shown there on the night of April 23, 1896 by Thomas A. Edison and the commemorating plaque was unveiled by his daughter, Mrs. John E. Sloane.

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## Also Looking Back

WHILE noting things historical we might record that the first motion picture studio—the Black Maria—was constructed at Orange, N. J., forty-five years ago, 1893, and the first motion picture theatre, the Electric, was opened in Los Angeles in April, 1902. April is a historical month for the motion picture and we will tell you more in this connection in our next issue of Motion Picture Week plans.

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## Making a Biographical Film

(Continued from page 7)

give the public something different, something uplifting, something educational. You would be surprised to see the number of letters received daily offering suggestions for further biographical films. The lives of Tolstoi, Goya and others have been suggested frequently. And in addition to this there has been a visible increase of interest in the main personalities. After the release of *The Life of Emile Zola* there was a tremendous revival of interest in Zola's writings, and, as a consequence, the demand for his works increased manyfold both in Europe and America. It is facts such as these that convince us of the public's interest in well-constructed biographical films.



# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS

## DEPARTMENT

This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of Exceptional and Honorable

Mention. The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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## The Citadel

Adapted by Ian Dalrymple, Frank Wead, Elizabeth Hill and Emlyn Williams from A. J. Cronin's novel, directed by King Vidor, photographed by Harry Stradling, musical score by Louis Levy. Produced by Victor Saville for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, distributed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

### The cast

Andrew .....	Robert Donat
Christine .....	Rosalind Russell
Denny .....	Ralph Richardson
Owen .....	Emlyn Williams
Dr. Lawford .....	Rex Harrison
Toppy LeRoy .....	Penelope Dudley Ward
Ben Chenkin .....	Francis Sullivan
Mrs. Orlando .....	Mary Clare
Charles Every .....	Cecil Parker
Mrs. Thornton .....	Nora Swinburne
Joe Morgan .....	Edward Chapman
Old woman .....	Haidee Wright
Lady Roebank .....	Athene Seyler
Mr. Boon .....	Felix Aylmer
Nurse Sharp .....	Joyce Bland
Mr. Stillman .....	Percy Parsons
Mrs. Page .....	Dilys Davis
Doctor Page .....	Basil Gill
Doctor Llewellyn .....	Joss Ambler

SOMEHOW, out of the complicated mysteries of international film collaboration, the British-American quota requirements, and the hit-or-miss luck of the movies, a fine film has arrived. From an English novel, made in England by an American company and an American director, from a script in which Hollywood had a hand and with one Hollywood actress assisting a cast predominantly English, *The Citadel* is a remarkably unified satisfaction to the mind, to the emotions and to humanitarian ideals, as well as being what any good movie has to be, good entertainment.

As it happens, *The Citadel* comes along at the same time as some other films about doctors, but not with the dubious aroma of being one of a cycle. It has the advantages and the disadvantages of having been

made from a novel that a great many people have read. Those who have read it will inevitably make comparisons, and find, to their joy or sorrow, that this or that has been changed. Those to whom A. J. Cronin's work is still a closed book will detect, more or less consciously, that some parts of the film, being so much more narrative than dramatic, must have been derived from a novel, but they won't be bothered because it's the wife who lives and the friend who dies, or because the little Italian girl wanted to be a ballet dancer. And readers and non-readers alike will find plenty to be stirred by and to enjoy.

The story concerns a young doctor just starting on his career, first in a little Welsh town, then in a mining community, where his inexperience and idealism and fighting spirit run up against ignorance and indifference and established prejudice, but where he finds himself and what he is good for. And a friend and a wife. Then there comes a period of getting nowhere in London, followed by a period of evergrowing success as a fashionable physician, and a cynical falling-off from his youthful idealism. Then a tragic realization of what he has been drifting into, a new affirmation of principle and devotion, and a new start.

All the first part, up to the London life, is splendidly spirited and human and real. The bringing to life of the still-born baby, the blowing up of the pestilential sewer, the emergency operation in the mine, are like something out of news-reels, far from any suggestion of studios and actors. The homes and streets of the poor, the miners and their families, might be life that the best English documentists had gone after with their cameras and brought success-

fully to the screen. And it is saved from being drab and depressing by something dauntless and vigorous and cheerful in the way Manson and his girl and his friend set about storming their citadel.

Probably the London part is just as true, but wealthy hypochondriacs, flossy golf-playing specialists, expensive apartments and motorcars, lack something of the vitality that shows so much more obviously in scenes and people concerned with more desperate struggles. At any rate Manson's success among the rich seems much more on the surface of things, and his absorption in money-making, and its attendant and increasing indifference to the fiery creed of his earlier days, doesn't quite come off as natural or consistent. Here, no doubt, is where the novel could do a better job than a movie can, taking page after page of undramatic narrative to show how in a man like Manson his energies and ambitions could be diverted, and he could become dinky-moustached and finically stylish in raiment, and still be the same man underneath. But altogether it makes a rather dull and rather unconvincing episode, if only by comparison with what went before and what comes after. For he does wake up again, roused by one of those unnecessary tragedies that stir rage and fight in a doctor who really honors his own profession. It is a noble rage we see him in at the end, and pressing forward again in a noble fight.

Here, after long dallying with less worthy things, King Vidor has a film he can direct with his best skill and energies. He had the best of help, obviously, from Victor Saville who supervised the production, from the people who adapted the novel, from a cast of actors who are all superlatively good. Robert Donat and Ralph Richardson and Rosalind Russell and Emyln Williams and Rex Harrison stand out because their parts permit them to, but they merely head a list of excellent players extensive enough to include the lowliest extra and Denny's dog. The picture is exceedingly satisfactory proof that hands can unite across the sea to fine effect when they go about it in the right way, with the right material.

*Rated Exceptional.*

J. S. H.

## The Lady Vanishes

Screenplay by Sidney Gilliat and Frank Launder, continuity by Alma Revelle, from the novel "The Wheel Spins" by Ethel Lina White, directed by Alfred Hitchcock, photographed by Jack Cox, settings by Vetchinsky, musical director Louis Levy. Produced and distributed by Gaumont-British.

### The cast

Iris Henderson	Margaret Lockwood
Gilbert	Michael Redgrave
Miss Froy	Dame May Whitty
Dr. Harz	Paul Lukas
Caldicott	Naughton Wayne
Charters	Basil Radford
Mr. Todhunter	Cecil Parker
"Mrs." Todhunter	Linden Travers
Baroness	Mary Clare
Hotel Manager	Emile Boreo
Blanche	Googie Withers
Julie	Sally Stewart
Signor Doppo	Philip Leaver
Signora Doppo	Zelma Van Dias
Nun	Catherine Lacy
Madame Kummer	Josephine Wilson
The officer	Charles Oliver
Anna	Kathleen Tremaine

ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S art in directing a picture is something as delightful to watch as a fine ballet dancer—sureness, grace, rhythm, all intricately weaving into a beautiful pattern. There's always the hope that he may finish with an astonishing, breathtaking Nijinsky leap, but if instead he ends by falling on his ear, it's with the effect of having decided it would be more fun to climax his performance that way. There's a gusto about a Hitchcock film that must mean he enjoys making it. It seems like a game to him (considering Mr. Hitchcock's person it's probably better to drop the "dance" fancy) which he plays with great enthusiasm and skill, but since it's the playing that interests him, and not winning, if he gets tired he quits trying, going on indifferently or even clowning till the whistle blows. (Remembering how, if you happen to recognize him, you see him in person, fleetingly but startlingly, in the arrival-at-the-station scene near the end of *The Lady Vanishes*, you're sure there's a Puck operating in some portion of that immense little body.)

Every Hitchcock fan has some pet among the Hitchcock films, but surely none of them comes nearer technical perfection than about two-thirds of *The Lady Vanishes*. It is absolute brilliance of visual narrative,



with such selection and arrangement of detail and emphasis as a master makes, and while the story builds up and progresses, characters emerge, alive and touched with humor, each one completely individual and fresh-minted. Every word spoken has something to add, and every sound. For con-

part of that method: what lady is going to vanish, and when?) he lets them into things that are secrets from his characters, and all the time there are bits of mystery not to be cleared up till the end. That flower box falling from the window: whom was it meant to hit? Is it Iris Henderson or Miss



*Close on the heels of solving some of the mystery in "The Lady Vanishes"*

sistently ingenious, illuminating and effective use of the sound-track, there's no director whose name comes to mind to compare with Hitchcock, and it is always natural and unforced.

It would be a great disservice to retail the plot of *The Lady Vanishes*. The pleasure in seeing it for the first time comes from not knowing what is going to happen, and the second time and other times thereafter from watching how things are made to happen. Not many films stand that as a test. Hitchcock has his own peculiar way with his spectators: he lets them know a little, and guess a little (the very title is

Froy who is in danger? Pretty soon, on that train speeding with such astonishing life-likeness through the Balkan countryside, we find out that much, but how could she have vanished from a train that hadn't stopped? How could that other woman have taken her place? After a time we can guess that much, too, but the reason for it has become even more mysterious. The people who insist that nothing has happened—nobody disappeared, no change made in ladies—each seems to have a valid personal reason for pretending ignorance, and yet they may all be in some sinister conspiracy. Then little, vivid, things begin to add up:

the writing on the window-pane, the broken eyeglasses, the empty tea-package: till at last two people are sure there is danger aboard the train, and the danger comes into the open. But there is mystery enough left to last till the finish—why did that strange thing happen to the guitar-player, way back in the inn-yard before they all got on the train?

The better a story of this kind is in building up its mystery and terror, the harder it is to make a solution that isn't something of a let-down. The solution in this case, frankly, is just that. And because the quiet piling up of natural incidents into a complicated melodrama has been so tremendously effective, the noisy unleashing of wholesale gun-play in the climax is a let-down too. Gun-fights have lost practically all of their terror on the screen, and in this film that sort of thing is particularly out of key with the beautifully unhackneyed style and material that has gone before.

Like all Hitchcock films this one is full of vivid, racy characters. The brain specialist (villain or not?), the deaf and dumb nun with the unexpected shoes, the pompadoured Baroness, the Italian magician

and his family, the two Englishmen for whom a cricket match is a world crisis—they are all odd individuals, fitting securely and unobtrusively into the plot but each distinctively alive, of a definite personal color. The main-plot people are more conventional but lively, intelligent and pleasant. All the actors embodying these parts are just right.

There's a tendency to deplore Mr. Hitchcock's obsession with ordinary melodrama—though of course it isn't "ordinary" melodrama at all, compared with the general run of mystery-and-action yarns. (And because the plots are what they are, there's also a tendency to overlook an implicit social comment in the biting, candid-camera realism of countless of his characters.) It is really just as deplorable that *Treasure Island* is nothing but a pirate story, that Dumas wasn't Flaubert, or that Walt Disney doesn't make documentary films. Alfred Hitchcock, in a far from perfect world, comes close to perfection in his own little field. He makes a good mouse-trap, and lots of people know it.

J. S. H.

*Rated Honorable Mention.*

## Critical Comment

### By the Way

FOR people who always have their eyes on the movie stream, either because they like to or have to, it is always a bit exciting as well as refreshing to see a new talent emerge, and watch what becomes of it. John Brahm is a new person interesting to watch, a director who used to mount plays in Vienna, whose first film was the English *Broken Blossoms*, and whose entire output since then has been three pictures in Hollywood. He is interesting because he manifestly knows what the secret of movie-making is—how, in other words, to use a camera to tell a story—and because he has a style of his own, and because he seems able to take quite different types of stories and make them all equally worth watching just by the way he handles them. He did *Penitentiary* a little while back, and his

newest film is *Girls' School*, utterly different in content, different in the way he has treated them, but each the kind of thing that makes you ask "Who directed that picture?" *Girls' School* is a fairly flimsy affair that could have been painfully sweetish and silly—perhaps its chief virtue, judged strictly, is the negative one of having avoided a lot of embarrassing things that might have been expected in such a story. But for anyone interested in how things are done, there is the fascination of watching a sure hand at work, and a knowing mind and sensitive feeling guiding the hand. Mr. Brahm seems to be a man who won't get into a rut, whose career as a director will be well worth keeping track of.

In *Drums* England tries her hand at something that Hollywood has shown considerable fondness for doing, celebrating the Kipling spirit and Britain's ways in shoul-



dering the white man's burden. In all fairness it must be said that *Drums* is more restrained about it than, for instance, *Lives of a Bengal Lancer* or *Wee Willie Winkie*, with the obvious advantage of presenting English actors in English parts. It is picturesque and stirring, with an old-time plot of native intrigue and British heroism, and a lot of remarkably colorful and interesting detail. The most notable thing about it, however, is purely technical—that its color photography is the best that has been put to dramatic uses on the screen. It goes far to further the conviction that movies in color are really finding themselves.

J. S. H.

## The Motion Picture Is Studied

LECTURES and courses in the motion picture of a wide variety are available in New York City for those who wish to be entertained and to learn. We will tell our readers of them, as those who live near enough may wish to attend and those who live far will be interested, we think, because this gives proof positive of the growing importance and attention granted the motion picture by the institutions of higher learning.

New York University School of Education offers for the fifth year its well known course on "The Motion Picture: Its Artistic, Educational and Social Aspects." This course, directed by Dr. Frederic M. Thrasher, is presented under the joint auspices of the University and the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures and presents distinguished lecturers in talks accompanied by films. It is a regular course on the college level conferring full credit in all curricula in the School of Education, and it is also a course of wide interest to community motion picture group leaders.

Subjects presented the Thursday evenings so far have been "The Public Library and Motion Pictures" by George Freedley, Curator of the Theatre Collection, New York Public Library; "The Medium of the Motion Picture: Its Nature, Range and Limi-

tations," by Dr. Thrasher, illustrated by a special showing of *The March of the Movies*, an important historical assemblage of films compiled by the National Board of Review; "Motion Pictures and Fashions" by Vyvyan Donner, Fashion Editor of *Movietone News*; "The Film as Journalism and Entertainment" by Jack Glenn, a leading director of the March of Time, illustrated by *March of Time* episodes; "Experimental and Abstract Films" with the film *Lot in Sodom*, made by Dr. John S. Watson, Jr., of Rochester, N. Y., shown to illustrate the topic, and discussed by Jean H. Lenauer, President, Lenauer International Films, Inc.; "The American Motion Picture Abroad" by Nathan D. Golden, Chief of the Division of Motion Pictures, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, U. S. Department of Commerce.

Professor Knowlton of the School of Education of New York University also offers two courses of interest in connection with motion pictures: the first is entitled "Visual and Auditory Materials in the Social Studies" and the second is "The Study and Appreciation of American History Through the Motion Picture."

Columbia University in its University Extension Division of Film Study offers for a second year its Motion Picture Parade, twenty evenings of interesting and unusual films. It is a subscription series and began October 19th with Harrison Forman, technical consultant on *Lost Horizon* and newsreel cameraman who secured the first films of the 1937 bombing of Shanghai, as the speaker and on the 26th, Dr. Mortimer Adler of the University of Chicago, author of "Art and Prudence," an outstanding book on the motion picture.\* Other well-known speakers and specially selected films will be presented on future Wednesday evening.

One of the oldest specialized courses in the motion picture is that given by Columbia University Extension, Department of English and Comparative Literature on "Motion Pictures—Scenario Writing and Production" by Mrs. Frances Taylor Patterson and Mr. Arthur E. Krows. It is planned for the profit of those who intend

\*Reviewed in the National Board Magazine, June 1937.

to write original screen stories, to secure staff positions with the film companies or to enter the field of motion picture reviewing and follows the workshop plan, allowing for individual writing projects.

The Department of Fine Arts of Columbia University also sponsors a course on "The History, Technique and Aesthetic of the Motion Picture," conducted by the Museum of Modern Art Film Library. Among the topics for the course are History of Films to 1915; History of Films to 1928; Basis of Film Technique; Camera Work and Lighting; Scenarios; Sources of Film Material and Preparation of Script; corporate history and social significance of films. Visits to studios and laboratories will acquaint students with production, cutting, dubbing and processing.

The New School for Social Research gives attention to the motion picture through its course "The Cinema; Introduction and Survey." This course consists of a survey of the motion picture industry, with special emphasis on the practices of modern production, the properties of the scenario, the origin and development of film language, theories of the cinema as an art and as a social force. It aims to provide a working knowledge of the world of the motion picture. The New School also provides a Workshop in Film Making with the purpose of providing serious amateur film makers with a working knowledge of film theory and practice.

The Film and Sprockets Society of the Art Department of City College is undertaking the presentation of a series of outstanding documentary films beginning November 4th. These showings will trace the development of this new cinema form from its beginnings up through such outstanding films as *The New Earth* and *The River*. The first evening's program—"Roots of the Documentary"—includes *Nanook of the North*, the first documentary ever made.

The Museum of Modern Art is holding a fall series of four film programs and a lecture at the Dalton School on Wednesday afternoon covering such subjects as "From the Invention of Films to *The Birth of a Nation*," "Progress and Close of the Silent

Era," "The Sound Film," and "Great Actresses of the Past."

Other university activities with the motion picture will be recorded in future issues of this Magazine, as there is with the new school year a renewed and increasing interest worthy of note by all students of the motion picture whether in the classroom or in the forum or study group.

## Films and Education

(Continued from page 11)

with Mrs. Richard M. McClure, President of the Better Films Council of Chicagoland, presenting a full report of the work of her council. Herman A. De Vry, President of De Vry Corp., is the organizer of these Conferences, held in Chicago since 1925 (this is the first one to have published proceedings) and A. P. Hollis is director and editor of this volume.

If a part of education week program is to be safety, educational aid in this can be secured from "Sources of Safety Films and Slides" compiled by Safety Education Association Projects, Research Division, National Education Association. The sources dealing with various aspects of safety are divided into street and highway safety; fire prevention; first aid, or driver training, listing both 35 and 16 mm. films.

The French Cinema Center has acquired the rights of French productions for the non-theatrical field which will be made available for distribution. An advisory committee composed of prominent American educators has been formed to select the films best suited for consumption in the educational groups. Most of the sound films will be left in their original language so that students of French may obtain the maximum of oral application of the language. A catalog is now being compiled of the subjects to be distributed to the various colleges and universities in the United States.

"Films of Everyday Life" is the title of a bibliography of 236 selected films on current problems compiled by Hilla Wehberg for the Production Committee of the Metropolitan Motion Picture Council, New York City. It is intended to give organiza-



tions interested in making films a cross section of the work already done in their respective fields, but is also interesting to users as well as producers of non-theatrical films.

"Filmo Topics," published by Bell & Howell, outstanding source of equipment and films for educational use, has an Autumn edition with plenty of interesting material for non-theatrical users and amateur producers.

Going farther from home we note a pamphlet which has just come to our desk telling of the inauguration of a Visual Education Society of India with educators of that country as its leaders. It has a program of fifteen aims and objects, among them are to promote the cause of education of the child as well as the adult by means of educational films and other visual aids; to bring together all persons and institutions who believe in the efficacy of the use of educational films and other visual aids in supplementing education; to arrange lectures and demonstrations to illustrate the potentialities of educational films; to encourage experimental films for assessing their definite educational value; to endeavor to get recognition of the place of films in education and propaganda by Universities and Governments; to encourage production and exhibition of educational films by the Film Industry of the country; to encourage professors and teachers to produce educational films by giving them technical and other help; to see films with the object of assessing and certifying their educational value; to organize short courses to train teachers and others interested in visual education to turn out good visual instructors; to build up a library of educational films, slides and literature pertaining to visual education. These objectives sound not unlike those of longer established and more familiar groups here at home, indicating the world-wide similarity of the visual education program.

**H**AVE you had your copy of **SELECTED BOOK-FILMS** compiled by the National Board for Book Week, November 13th-19th, and for year around book film tie-up? It is available at 10c.

## SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

(Continued from page 2)

f **I STAND ACCUSED**—Robert Cummings, Helen Mack. Original screen story by Gordon Kahn. Directed by John H. Auer. A story of a young lawyer, ambitious for money, who becomes the mouthpiece for an unscrupulous racketeer. Republic.

f **IF I WERE KING**—Ronald Colman, Basil Rathbone, Frances Dee. Original screen story by Justin Huntley MacCarthy. Directed by Frank Lloyd. A handsome remake of the popular old doublet-and-hose romantic play about Francois Villon, and how he had a week as Grand Constable of France and drove away the besieging Burgundians from Paris for King Louis. Paramount.

f **KARL FREDRIK REGERAR** (Karl Fredrik Reigun) — Sigurd Wallen, Gull-Maj Norin, Bjorn Berglund, Dagmar Ebbesen. Original screen story by John Sanden. Directed by Gustaf Edgren. A capably acted and interesting story, with a good sprinkling of comedy, of the struggle between the workers and capitalists in Sweden. A former worker on a large estate becomes Minister of Agriculture, and discovers that his daughter has fallen in love with the son of the hated estate owner. In Swedish with English subtitles. Fred O. Renard.

f **LA DONNA MISTERIOSA** ovvero **LA CONTESSA DI PARMA** (The Mysterious Lady or the Countess of Parma)—Elissa Eganni. Written and directed by Alessandro Blasetto. A comedy, entirely in Italian, about a famous athlete and a mannequin whom he mistakenly believes to be a countess. Roma Film Co.

f **\*LADY VANISHES, THE**—See Exceptional Photoplays Dept, page 16.

f **LISTEN DARLING**—Judy Garland, Freddie Bartholomew. Story by Katherine Brush. Directed by Edwin L. Marin. Some amusing and uncommon adventures of a couple of youngsters in their efforts to keep an attractive widow from marrying the wrong man. A good deal of singing in it, too. Walter Pidgeon and Alan Hale contribute some pleasant grown-upness to it. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f **MAD MISS MANTON, THE**—Barbara Stanwyck, Henry Fonda. Based on an original story by Wilson Collison. Directed by Leigh Jason. A lively combination of comedy and murder mystery, with an energetic Park Avenue girl and her deb friends in rivalry with the police in the hunt for the murderer. When it isn't laughable it's

exciting—a fine mixture for entertainment purposes. RKO-Radio.

- f **MAN TO REMEMBER.** A—Ann Shirley, Edward Ellis, Lee Bowman. Original screen story by K. H. Taylor. Directed by Garson Kanin. The life story of a country doctor faced with greed and pettiness in a small town. The picture shows his struggles for making the town a better, healthier place with great feeling and does a good job on those who oppose him. Good acting all around. RKO-Radio.
- f **MAN WITH A HUNDRED FACES, THE—**Tom Walls, Lilli Palmer. Novel by W. B. M. Farguson. Directed by Albert de Courville. A silk-hatted, monocled modern Robin Hood operating in London, in rivalry with a gang who steal with more selfish motives. An interesting variation of the gangster theme, light and lively and thoroughly English. Gaumont British.
- f **\*MEN WITH WINGS—**Fred MacMurray, Louise Campbell, Ray Milland. Original screen story by Robert Carson. Directed by William A. Wellman. A romantic history of aviation from the beginning up to the present day, done in color. The story is of two men who love the same woman. Some of the flying is nice but the picture is too long. Paramount.
- f **MYSTERIOUS MR. MOTO, THE —**Peter Lorre. Original Screen story by Philip MacDonald and Norman Foster. Directed by Norman Foster. Mr. Moto in London, tracking down an international League of Assassins. 20th Century-Fox.
- f **SERVICE DE LUXE—**Constance Bennett, Vincent Price, Charlie Ruggles, Helen Broderick, Mischa Auer. Original screen story by Vera Casperly. Directed by Rowland V. Lee. A mildly entertaining picture, with some good laughs supplied by Mischa Auer, about an efficient and successful young business woman who falls in love with a man who hates bossy females. Universal.
- f **\*SISTERS, THE—**Bette Davis, Errol Flynn, Anita Louise, Jane Bryan. Novel by Myron Brinig. Directed by Anatole Litvak. The varying fortunes of three sisters who married, one for money, one for a good home, one for love. The story centers chiefly around the latter and her husband, a reporter of unstable qualities. The background—1904 to 1908—is a vivid American panorama, and Bette Davis (in a sympathetic role) gives it a big emotional appeal. Warner Bros.
- fj **STABLEMATES—**Wallace Beery, Mickey Rooney. Original screen story by William Thiele and Reginald Owen. Directed by Sam Wood. Sure-fire laughs and tears in a story about a man, a boy and a horse—a broken-down drifter who had once been a brilliant vet, a clever and ambitious orphan kid, and a horse with champion blood in her. The horse should be starred with Beery and Rooney, who are at the top of their form. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f **STORM, THE—**Charles Bickford. Original screen story by Daniel Moore and Hugh King. Directed by Harold Young. A romance of the sea, not very well done. A boy's admiration of his elder brother takes him on an adventurous trip. Universal.
- f **SUEZ—**Tyrone Power, Loretta Young, Annabella. Original screen story by Sam Duncan. Directed by Allan Dwan. A lavish production of the building of the Suez Canal. Ferdinand de Lesseps' dream of a water way between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea becomes a reality and brings the brilliant young Frenchman fame at the terrible sacrifice of those he loves best. The desert scenes are unusually good and the acting of Annabella outstanding. 20th Century-Fox.
- f **SWING THAT CHEER—**Tom Brown, Robert Wilcox, Constance Moore, Andy Devine. Original screen story by Thomas Ahearn and F. Maury Grossman. Directed by Harold Schuster. The usual football story with a new twist of the hero curing the swelled head of the team's star by a novel method. Universal.
- fj **\*THAT CERTAIN AGE—**Deanna Durbin, Melvyn Douglas, Jackie Cooper. Original screen story by F. Hugh Herbert. Directed by Edward Ludwig. A delightful story of a young girl's first crush on a much older man, amusing and a bit touching, with enough salty insight into human nature to keep its sentiment humorously wholesome. It should have a strong appeal to all sorts of audiences. Universal.
- f **THERE GOES MY HEART —**Fredric March, Virginia Bruce, Patsy Kelly. Original screen story by Ed Sullivan. Directed by Norman Z. McLeod. A pleasant, jouncey farce-comedy whose familiar framework about a reporter on the trail of a missing heiress is brightened immeasurably by clever handling and clever cast. United Artists.
- f **VACATION FROM LOVE—**Dennis O'Keeffe, Florence Rice. Original screen story by Patterson McNutt and Harlan Ware. Directed by George Fitzmaurice. A breezy and amusing comedy of a young couple who resolved that their married life should always have plenty of fun in it, and some of the difficulties they had in sticking to their



resolve. Bright and gay. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

- f YOUNG DOCTOR KILDARE—Lew Ayres, Lionel Barrymore, Lynne Carver. Original story by Frederick Faust. Directed by Harold S. Bucquet. The first successful step, as a hospital interne, of a young doctor in his career, in which he learns what his specialty is to be. Very interesting as a story: the hospital has been somewhat fictionalized, but the general exposition of the doctor's ideal is effective. If this is the beginning of a series, it is a promising beginning. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

- f YOUTH TAKES A FLING—Andrea Leeds, Joel McCrea. Original screenplay by Myles Connolly and Tom Reed. Directed by Archie Mayo. A young man comes to New York from the Kansas prairies convinced that he is born to be a sailor. But the girl he meets thinks otherwise and this amusing picture is based entirely on his struggle to escape and her determination to hold him. Universal.

## SHORT SUBJECTS

### CARTOONS AND COMEDIES

- tj ALADDIN'S LANTERN (Our Gang)—The Gang gives a show, and a funny one. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- tj CRACKED ICE (Merrie Melodies Cartoon)—A pig with the voice of W. C. Fields tries to edge drinks off a hospitable St. Bernard. Vitaphone.
- tj \*FERDINAND THE BULL—A Disney cartoon based on the story and drawings of the original book by Munro Leaf. Its charm and simplicity should make it immensely popular. RKO-Radio.
- tj GOOBY AND WILBUR—A Disney cartoon with the new grasshopper personality, Wilbur. RKO-Radio.
- tj GOONLAND (Popeye the Sailor Cartoon)—Popeye sails to Goonland to rescue his father. Paramount.
- tj HOLLYWOOD BOWL (Walter Lantz cartoon comedy)—Hollywood stars caricatured, and a cartoon performance in the Bowl. Universal.
- tj JOHNNY SMITH AND POKER-HUNTAS (Merrie Melodies)—Amusing cartoon of the Pilgrim fathers modernized. Vitaphone.
- tj LITTLE PANCHITO VANILLA (Merrie Melodies)—Little Pancho becomes a bullfighter. Done in color. Vitaphone.
- f MANY SAPPY RETURNS (Broadway Comedies)—A typical Charley Chase (he's a chauffeur in this) with amusing situations. Columbia.
- f MEN IN FRIGHT—Alfalfa gets into an operating room by mistake—pretty good fun. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- tj RABBIT HUNT, THE—Rabbit pursued by gun and dog with all honors going to the slick rabbit. Universal.
- tj SKIPPY—Percy Crosby's "Skippy", saving a dog from the dog-catcher. Rather different from other cartoons. United Artists.
- tj UGLY DUCKLING, THE (Silly Symphony Cartoon)—What happened when a swan came out of a duck's egg and how the baby was scorned till he found his right parents. RKO-Radio.
- fj GREAT ADVENTURES OF WILD BILL HICKOK, THE (serial) NOS. 9-15—Directed by Mack Wright and Sam Nelson. The band of Phantom Riders makes a number of new attempts to kill Wild Bill and destroy the covered wagon train, but Bill either outwits them or is miraculously saved every time. The likeableness of the hero and the magnificent photography make this an entertaining serial. Columbia.
- f GREAT LIBRARY MISERY, THE—A very amusing farce satirizing the red tape of the free library. Vitaphone.
- f HOW TO WATCH FOOTBALL (Robert Benchley Series)—One of Robert Benchley's very best. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f JIMMY DORSEY AND HIS ORCHESTRA—Musical. Vitaphone.
- f RAY KINNEY AND HIS HAWAIIANS (Melody Masters)—Musical. Vitaphone.
- f VENETIAN MOONLIGHT—Musical numbers presented in conventional old-fashioned style, but the music is well done. RKO-Radio.
- f ZERO GIRL (Broadway Brevities)—Some excellent skating, and the trials of a poor guy who learns skating to win an ice-prima-donna. Vitaphone.

### INFORMATIONALS

- fj CAIRO, CITY OF CONTRASTS—A Fitzpatrick Travel-talk in excellent color, with particular emphasis on the modern aspects of the Egyptian city compared with the nearby Pharaoh remains. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj CHAMPION AIR HOPPERS—About gliding and soaring in motorless airplanes. Paramount.
- f CHINA TODAY (Color Parade Series)—Interesting shots of China. Vitaphone.
- fj COFFEE FROM BRAZIL TO YOU—A most interesting and informative picture showing the many processes through which coffee passes from the time it is planted until it reaches the consumer. Pan American Union.
- fj DEEP END—Girl diving champions. RKO-Radio.
- tj \*ETERNAL FIRE, THE—An unusually beautiful and interesting short feature in color, showing Vesuvius in eruption, Pompeii as it is today, and scenes around the Bay of Naples. United Artists.
- f \*FASHION FORECASTS (Fashions in Technicolor)—A pretty gorgeous fashion review with Ilka Chase giving a smart commentary. Tres chic. 20th Century-Fox.
- f FISHERMAN'S PARADISE (RKO Radio Sportscope)—Marlin fishing. RKO Radio.
- fj MADEIRA, ISLE OF ROMANCE—A Fitzpatrick Travel-talk of a picturesque island, with a good deal of reference to its history. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f MARCH OF TIME NO. 2, THE—"U. S. Firefighters". How the theories of Franklin H. Wentworth, fire prevention expert, are being carried out in U. S. cities. "The British Dilemma". Britain's foreign policy in relation to Hitler's ambitions. A good resume, slightly dated by subsequent events. RKO Radio.
- f MIRACLES OF SPORT (Color Parade Series)—Experts in sport. Vitaphone.
- f NOSTRADAMUS—An interesting account of the 16th Century scientist who turned prophet, and the astonishing way his prophesies have come true. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj PLAYFUL POLAR BEARS, THE (Color Classics)—A color classic of the frozen north and polar bears. Paramount.
- fj \*POW WOW—A fine technicolor study of the Navajo Indians in their reservation. Instructive and impressing. Vitaphone.
- f SUBMARINE CIRCUS—Fighting, swimming, wrestling and truck-stunts under the waters of a Florida river. RKO-Radio.
- f THEY'RE ALWAYS CAUGHT (Crime Doesn't Pay Series)—An absorbing account of scientific crime detection, in which an almost perfect murder is cleared up successfully. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f THINK IT OVER (Crime Doesn't Pay Series)—A systematic arson racket is exposed and wiped out. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj \*TIMBER TOPPERS (Ed Thorgeren Sports)—A lovely picture of horse training. Preparing the thoroughbreds for the jumps and some of the finished products. Slow motion used to show the perfect timing of the horses. 20th Century-Fox.
- f TRANS AMERICA (Reelisms)—A trip from New York to California in one of the big transcontinental planes. Some interesting scenery. RKO-Radio.
- f UNUSUAL OCCUPATIONS NO. 12—The item that is most interesting shows something about how Edgar Bergen evolved his dummies for his ventriloquist act. Paramount.

### MUSICALS, NOVELTIES AND SERIALS

- f COMMUNITY SING NO. 12—A number of well sung Scotch songs in which the audience is asked to join. Columbia.
- f DEFYING DEATH (Floyd Gibbons "Your True Adventure" Series)—A heroic woman who saves her two children. Vitaphone.
- fj DICK TRACY RETURNS (serial) NOS. 9-15—Directed by William Witney and John English. Dick Tracy as head of G-men ends his long pursuit of a man and his five sons who commit big, clever robberies. Republic.

## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures is a citizen body, organized in 1909 by the People's Institute of New York City as a medium for reflecting intelligent public opinion regarding a growing art and entertainment. This is still the Board's function, together with that of disseminating information on the subject of motion pictures and carrying on a constructive program having to do with community cooperation in the advancement and uses of the motion picture.

The National Board is opposed to legal censorship and is in favor of the community better films plan of placing emphasis upon and building support for the finer and more worthwhile films. It is at all times glad to cooperate with any agency to encourage and guide the motion picture in developing its possibilities both as recreation and as entertainment.

It carries on its work through various committees. All members of the committees serve without pay. No member is connected with the motion picture industry. They are representative of varied interests and activities and many are connected with large public welfare organizations or educational institutions.

The General Committee is a body evolved out of the original group organized in 1909. It is the appeal and central advisory committee of the National Board to which policies are referred and to which decisions of the Review Committee regarding pictures may be carried either by the producers or by the Review Committee itself.

The Executive Committee is composed of members of the General Committee and is the directing body of the National Board, charged with the formulation of policies, the election of members, the expenditure of funds and supervision of all administrative affairs.

The Review Committee is a large group of 300 members carrying on the work of reviewing the films. It is divided into sub-groups which meet for review per schedule during each week in the projection rooms of the various motion picture companies.

The Membership Committee supervises the membership list of the Review Committee and recommends the names of proposed new members for consideration by the Executive Committee.

The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays is composed of critics and students of the cinema interested particularly in encouraging the artistic development of the motion picture. It reviews and publishes a critique of the finest films and assists community groups in the showing of unusual films to special audiences. Its pioneer activity has done much to lay the foundation for the Little Photoplay Theatre movement and to stimulate the organization of subscription groups to develop audiences for the support of the creative achievements of the screen.

## NATIONAL MOTION PICTURE COUNCIL

The community or field work of the National Board of Review is conducted under its National Motion Picture Council, through affiliated membership groups, service contact groups and correspondents throughout the country. The National Council assists in the organization and program of work of local groups which are usually called Councils.

These Councils follow a plan initiated by the National Board in 1916 of having a membership composed of representatives from many organizations, cultural, educational, recreational, religious, and civic, so that they typify the original movement for community participation in the development and best use of the motion picture as recreation and education.

The objectives of such organizations are as follows:

To demonstrate through the education of public opinion, the effectiveness of selection and classification, instead of censorship, as a means of forwarding the development of the motion picture and its best uses.

To encourage through open meetings, forums, classes and other means, the study of the motion picture as a medium of entertainment, education and artistic expression.

To concentrate the attention of the public on specific worthwhile films through the publication of a Photoplay Guide to the selected pictures being currently shown at local theatres.

To arrange family Friday night or week-end programs of selected films, and junior matinees of pictures particularly suited to the tastes of children, through cooperation with local exhibitors.

To endorse and further the use of visual education through motion pictures in the schools.

To arrange and promote occasional exhibitions of exceptional and cultural films that would not normally be shown in the commercial theatres.

### PUBLICATIONS

The National Board of Review and its Council as an aid to the groups carrying out these objectives furnished an informational service through its publications.

**National Board of Review Magazine (monthly)**  
\$2.00 a year for individual subscriptions  
\$1.00 a year to Council or club groups.

**Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures**  
\$2.50 a year when taken alone, available at a special rate of \$1.00 in conjunction with the Magazine.

**Selected Pictures Catalog (annual)**.....25c

**Special Film Lists** .....10c ea.

Such as Selected Films for Children's Showings, Selected Book-Films, Educational Films, etc.

**National Board of Review—Its Background, Growth and Present Status**.....free

**National Board of Review—How It Works**.....free

**A Plan and a Program for Community Motion Picture Councils** .....10c



# NATIONAL BOARD of REVIEW MAGAZINE

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*Charles Laughton as the beachcomber and Elsa Lanchester as the missionary in  
"The Beachcomber" (See page 16)*

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# SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

*This department lists pictures selected by the Review Committee of the National Board of Review as worthy of popular patronage in the theatres, with an indication of the audience group suitability for each picture. The choice of the pictures included is based upon principles of selection developed through long study of public preference as to what constitutes good screen entertainment. The consensus of the Review Committee forms the basis for the reviews and audience recommendations of the pictures. The Review Committee consists of approximately 300 trained members representative of widely varied interests who volunteer their services.*

## Key to Audience Suitability

- f—Family audience. Pictures recommended for the family audience (12 years up).
- m—Mature audience. Pictures recommended for the adult audience (18 years up).
- j—Juvenile audience. Pictures suitable for children under 12.
- \*—Pictures especially worth seeing as above the average "selected" picture.

m ANGELS WITH DIRTY FACES — James Cagney, Pat O'Brien, Dead End Kids. Original screen story by Rowland Brown. Directed by Michael Curtiz. First National. See Exceptional Photoplays Dept., page 21.

f ARTISTS AND MODELS ABROAD—Jack Benny, Joan Bennett. Original story by Howard Lindsay and Russell Crouse. Directed by Mitchell Leisen. In this comedy a millionairess looking for thrills joins a stranded troupe of actors in Paris and there the fun begins. Paramount.

m \*BEACHCOMBER, THE — See Exceptional Photoplays Dept., page 16.

f CIPHER BUREAU — Leon Ames, Joan Woodbury, Don Dillaway. Original screen story by Arthur Hoerl and Monro Shaff. Directed by Charles Lamont. A story of spy-catching, centering in the bureau devoted to deciphering codes. Interesting details. Grand National.

fj COME ON, RANGERS—Roy Rogers. Original screen story by Gerald Geraghty and Jack Natteford. Directed by Joe Kane. A refreshing western of the days when Texas first came into the Union and the U. S. Cavalry took over, with disastrous results, from the Texas Rangers. Roy Rogers is pleasantly natural as a Texan. Republic.

f COWBOY AND THE LADY, THE—Gary Cooper, Merle Oberon. Original screen story by Sonya Levien and S. N. Behrman. Directed by H. C. Potter. A rather flimsy plot about a rich girl marrying a rodeo cowboy and concealing her family connections from him, made entertaining and charming by incidental detail and delightful performances by the actors, particularly the two stars. United Artists.

f DOWN ON THE FARM—The Jones Family, Louise Fazenda. Based on original stories by Homer Croy, Frank Fenton and Lynn Root. Directed by Malcolm St. Clair. While vacationing Mayor Jones, running for the Senate, gets all involved in a corn-husking contest with political consequences. Obvious but entertaining. 20th Century-Fox.

f EXPOSED—Glenda Farrell, Otto Kruger, Herbert Mundin. Screenplay by Charles Kaufman and Franklin Coen. Directed by Harold Schuster. Good cast and snappy direction make this picture move along with interest and speed. Story is unoriginal hash of racketeering and love-interest between a candid camera girl and a public prosecutor. Universal.

f GANGSTER'S BOY—Jackie Cooper, Robert Warwick. Original screen story by Robert D. Andrews and Karl Brown. Directed by William Nigh. The unjust difficulties a boy just finishing a fine high school career encounters when it becomes known that his father was a big-shot racketeer. A quieter film than the title would indicate, with a good deal of emphasis on the idealism of youngsters. Monogram.

f GREAT WALTZ, THE—Fernand Gravet, Luise Rainer, Miliza Korjus. Original screen story by Gottfried Reinhardt. Directed by Julien Duvivier. A romance based on the career of Johann Strauss the Waltz King, in which he seems for a time to be lured away from his sweet young wife by a glamorous opera singer. The music and the atmosphere of old Vienna give a rather trite story a lot of sparkle and liveliness. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

f JUST AROUND THE CORNER — Shirley Temple, Charles Farrell, Bennie Bartlett. Original screen story by Paul Gerard Smith. Directed by Irving Cummings. Shirley, demoted from the pent-house to the basement by the depression, keeps things lively in the Riverview apartments, and eventually does some effective work for confidence and business improvement. A cheerful story, and Miss Temple is probably more attractive than ever. 20th Century-Fox.

fj KING OF THE SIERRAS—Hobart Bosworth. Original screen story by Frank Gay. Directed by Samuel Diege. The story of a handsome white horse; how it was caught from the wild herd and the life it led before its captivity. The fine scenery and horseflesh is a little incomplete in itself, but there is plenty to please those who enjoy nature pictures—particularly youngsters. Grand National.

f LITTLE ADVENTURESS, THE — Edith Fellows, Richard Fiske, Jacqueline Wells. Original screen story by Michael Simmons and Paul Jarrico. Directed by D. Ross Lederman. A familiar sort of racing picture, in which an orphan girl of the man-

(Continued on page 22)



# NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW MAGAZINE

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## Fifteenth Annual Conference National Board of Review

ARRANGEMENTS have progressed sufficiently for us to be able to give a general outline of activities for this year's Conference. This outline is, of course, subject to change and modification, as many of the speakers on the subject of this year's Conference "The Making of a Motion Picture" are those whose appearance depends upon production schedules. But we print the main outline now for the benefit of those who wish to obtain a general idea of the program. More complete details will be published in our next issue.

The Conference will open on Thursday, February 2nd. It is hoped to arrange a radio broadcast on Thursday morning through which the opening of the Conference will be announced, followed by a radio address by one or more speakers on a topic of motion picture interest. As many members as possible will be welcomed to the broadcasting studio to witness in person the opening of the Conference.

Registration of delegates will follow at the Hotel Pennsylvania where most of the Conference sessions will be held.

Thursday afternoon we will present the first Conference Session at the hotel. There will be five speakers who will cover the first half of the subject chosen for this year: "The Making of a Motion Picture." These speakers will cover the following aspects of motion picture production: Script-

writing, Research, Casting, Costume and make-up, and Musical accompaniment.

Thursday evening delegates will be guests of the course in motion picture appreciation, at New York University, sponsored by the School of Education of the University and the National Board of Review, consisting of a lecture accompanied by the showing of special films.

Friday morning the Community Motion Picture Activities Panel Discussion will take place with an opportunity for free discussion of community activities.

Friday afternoon will be the second session of "The Making of a Motion Picture." The speakers will be: Director, Photographer, Sound Technician, Technical Engineer, and Actor.

Friday evening will be reserved for the showing of a new film.

The Junior session demonstrating phases of the 4-Star Club activity will be held on Saturday morning.

The Conference will close on Saturday noon with the twenty-fourth Annual Luncheon at the Hotel Pennsylvania. All our readers are welcomed at the Conference sessions and we hope many will plan to attend. Also we welcome any suggestions for incorporation in the Conference discussion, or word on any special interests which can be arranged in advance for Conference guests.

**February 2nd-4th Conference Hotel Pennsylvania, New York City**

# I Am a Talent Scout

By MARION ROBERTSON

*From a radio address given under the auspices of the National Board of Review, over New York City station WNYC on October 13th, 1938. Miss Robertson is a talent scout for RKO Pictures, Inc.*

**M**OST people I have met seem to think that they have a pretty good idea of the life and times of a talent scout. Every now and then they see a movie which shows them the talent scout in the person of a hard-boiled, energetic guy who hides behind potted palms in niteries and jumps out at unsuspecting chorus girls. This general impression, and a few others like it, are about the nearest most people ever get to knowing what really goes on in the endless search for screen beauty and talent.

In reality this hunt is pushed in every available place of entertainment. The most productive hunting grounds are the legitimate theaters of Broadway, because the people taking part in such productions come closest to being ready for immediate picture work. Next in importance are radio broadcasts, summer theater companies with professional and semi-professional talent, and the niteries. After them come the little theaters, along with community groups, students at colleges and dramatic schools; and the models who pose for commercial advertising and magazine covers. All of these people, in varying degrees, are accustomed to facing the public—and that's a tremendous asset in Hollywood. Even the managers of beauty pageants now realize that blank loveliness is not enough: their contestants are now judged by their intelligence, personality, and ability to act, sing or dance a little, as well as look like streamlined Venuses. For the talent scout to-day it's just like looking for a needle in a haystack—with a haystack around every corner. But the hunt goes on, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and the whole country must be fine-combed ahead of our competitors.

This will give you the impression that each motion picture company must employ hundreds of talent scouts to keep the country scoured. In fact this is not the case at all. With careful cooperation from RKO theatre managers in key cities, two of us, Mr. Arthur Willi and myself, manage to cover the whole of the Eastern States.

In case this sounds utterly impossible, I will give you a typical schedule for just one week in our year. Monday, a trip to Boston, where a musical comedy is being warmed up before opening in New York. Tuesday, the opening of a Broadway play. (If there are several openings on the same night and the distances are not too great, a scout can catch the first half of one play and the climax of a second by judicious taxi-riding. But it's very aggravating never to know how the first play turned out.) Wednesday is generally full, for there's likely to be a matinee in Washington and a night performance in Baltimore or Philadelphia. Thursday is peaceful; the day is spent in New York at the office interviewing likely candidates, rehearsing several who are to be given tests, and seeing previews of RKO pictures in which recent discoveries are appearing for the first time. Thursday night, if the scout is lucky, there is nothing more strenuous than a few night-clubs and an ice carnival. Friday brings a batch of auditions, radio broadcasts, another Broadway opening. On Saturday we fight through the football crowds to some neighboring college town to see the Varsity show or a commercial production tried out. And Sunday, well—Sunday is all our own, except for countless radio programs, and a dance recital or special benefit performance in the evening!

I know this all sounds nerve-wracking, but there's always the anticipation of something new; some surprising fresh talent which can be developed. And somehow we manage to work in other jobs, too: trips to key cities for auditions and interviews, and the making of what we call "produc-



*Dorothy Lovett  
leaves for  
Hollywood  
with the good  
wishes of  
Marion Robertson  
of  
R.K.O.*



tion tests"—that means finding the right person for a role in a new film and testing him or her from the script which is going to be used in Hollywood.

Tests of this kind are often the result of an emergency call from Hollywood, and we are proud of our emergency system. At any moment we may get a Hollywood SOS for a blond tenor with a football background, or a six foot brunette beauty who can tap-dance, or three Hindu boys with experience in handling elephants.

A fairly complete example of how we fill an emergency call is a story about Fay Bainter. Our production of *Quality Street* was about to start when we got a frantic wire from the Coast on a Thursday afternoon. Casting plans had gone wrong, and could Miss Bainter play the part of the elder sister? We located Miss Bainter, peacefully digging in the garden of her

country home, and she sportingly agreed to help. The script was sent to her that night by special messenger, and on Friday morning she arrived in the city for costume fittings, muttering her lines as she tried on crinolines.

I rushed her to the New York studio, made the test in the afternoon; got the undeveloped film aboard a plane. On Sunday afternoon the producers saw the developed print in Hollywood. They wired their complete satisfaction. Monday morning Fay Bainter took the westbound plane for the studio—and the renewal of a great career.

Let me emphasize that we don't always do our work at such a speed. It wouldn't be fair to the average film aspirant if we did. You know, the public has no idea of what constitutes a screen test, and how much preparation is needed. From the

naive letters I receive, most people seem to imagine that they have only to ask for a test (preferably on their lunch hour when they can spare the time!) and we push a button and the thing is done. Far from it! If we don't want the result to look like a ghastly passport photograph, glassy-eyed and frightened stiff, the subject has to spend several weeks selecting and rehearsing scenes. A good test should arouse, but not exhaust, the interest of our producers on the Coast. It must tell a story, but with brevity and vitality.

We choose a scene that will present the newcomer to best advantage, provide him or her with a partner who will lend support, and rehearse them until they are sure of themselves and comfortable before putting them under the distracting lights of the studio. To give the test reel something of the appearance of a feature picture we break the scene with close-ups, favoring each actor alternately. Properly cut and assembled the test reel runs about three minutes and shows how well the aspirants can play a part.

This is not all, however. To this compact scene we add several hundred feet of film of the subjects in an informal interview or conversation, to show them as they naturally speak and carry themselves.

From this description you might imagine that subjects who had had stage experience would be most likely to feel at ease when taking a test. Actually this is not true at all. It's nerve-racking for those people. On the stage you have to worry about projecting your voice and personality across the footlights to the audience. On a movie set, the camera and microphone reach out to get you. The camera is likely to exaggerate everything, so facial and bodily movements must be kept at a minimum. Jerky effects must be avoided at all costs; the moment your nerves tighten up, the camera seizes that stiffness and emphasizes it.

Some of the best veterans on the stage find the transition to screen technique most difficult, while rank amateurs, with nothing to unlearn, have no imagined hazards to make them nervous. Often they appear to greater advantage. Sometimes their profes-

sion may be a help to them—if they're used to a nerve-racking job a screen test is relatively unfrighting. I say this because I've noticed that of all the inexperienced people tested, the ones who showed least nervousness were salesmen and amateur golfers! I suppose golfers are so used to sinking 18 foot putts with a distracting gallery close behind them, that they don't mind 1000 watt lights and noisy technicians. And the salesmen have probably had too many doors slammed in their faces to care much either.

As a talent scout you have to expect every possible type of person to come for a screen test. I remember a 250 pound tenor from the Metropolitan who was supposed to put his arm consolingly around the fragile shoulders of his weeping daughter. Every time he made the gesture the poor girl had to be picked up and dusted off. Later, when singing a rousing song from a German comic opera, he insisted on wearing a sort of Robin Hood costume—peaked cap, fringed jerkin, knee breeches and high boots. Unfortunately the breeches didn't arrive with the other clothes from the costumers. But the tenor, undaunted, tucked his shorts up underneath the long jerkin and sang happily on. Each time he turned there would be a flash of white, rather like the tail of a rabbit going over a fence. The situation was saved by the property man, who very seriously sneaked up behind the great man and safety-pinned the offending BVD's out of sight!

Another time, the men on the crew had been roused from their usual indifference by the rumor that I was testing a strip-tease artiste. She was a gorgeous creature with a fine, husky blues-singing voice, and the boys' eyes bulged when she came out of the make-up room. But they were not to witness a free Minsky performance. The strip-tease queen was more completely clothed than an Eskimo! She wore a high-necked dinner gown which swept the floor; a white fox cape which entirely concealed her excellent figure; and long white gloves. It was only with great persuasion that I got her to take off the gloves. The crew went home in disgust. . . .



In addition to production tests the New York office sometimes gets a rush order for location work here in the East; for scenes in a feature which cannot be screened in California. Recently I had to gather up three character men and two juveniles for parts in a picture being shot at Annapolis. They had to be there on twelve hour notice, so there was plenty of scrambling before I located the last man (just out of the swimming pool in a Philadelphia suburb) and got his promise to report on location the next morning. He drove all night, checked in with the unit manager, put on a uniform and was on his way across the campus at Annapolis to get a crew haircut—when he found himself in a squad of midshipmen marching to class. The officer glared at the new comer, halted the squad and gave him a terrific tongue-lashing because he needed a haircut! Precious minutes went by before the unfortunate man could get out of the Navy, and by that time he had missed a bus which was to have taken him to the barber. But finally he did get his haircut, looked at himself in the mirror and wondered ruefully how long it would take to grow it again; then hurried off to location. And there was more grief waiting for him—the director wanted to know why in blazes he couldn't manage to be on time!

People often question me about the value of dramatic training—whether it really makes a great difference even among kids and youngsters. My answer can best be expressed through an example. Several weeks ago we had a flying visit from P. J. Wolfson, producer of *The Mad Miss Manton* which stars Barbara Stanwyck and Henry Fonda. With that picture finished, Mr. Wolfson was looking ahead to a new one, *The Pure in Mind*. This story, by Albert Bein, calls for a group of slum boys ranging in ages from fourteen to eighteen.

Before Mr. Wolfson's arrival I conferred with Big Brother organizations, directors of parochial camps and boys' clubs, and welfare groups. Two hundred and twelve boys were sent for interviews, and I se-

lected twenty-three of the right ages and types. Similar selections were made from nearly a hundred boys who had done radio and stage work. The list was reduced to thirty, each boy was provided with a brief scene from the picture script, and when Mr. Wolfson reached New York the readings began. Out of the thirty he approved eleven—ten professionals and one from the Navy Yard Boys' Club. The next day tests were made again, using scenes from the *Pure in Mind* script. The lone non-professional tried hard, and he certainly looked the part, but he just couldn't stand up against the more assured, adaptable boys with dramatic training. I hated to see that kid leave the studio that night: he knew he had failed, through no fault of his own.

Of the ten survivors, three were signed, and a few weeks ago I put them on the train for Hollywood. Soon you'll see them, all three, in celluloid: Charlie Powers, Walter Ward and Jim McCallion.

I think this example speaks for itself with regard to competition and the value of dramatic acting. To other ambitious youngsters who have an eye fixed on Hollywood, let me add a word of advice. You're going to have very tough competition if you try picture work without laying a solid foundation first. But you don't have to besiege Broadway. Dig yourself in at a dramatic school, a college group, a community theatre—whatever is near at hand. The passing of the stock company has made community theatres increasingly important as an incubator for Hollywood. Count yourself lucky if there is such an organization in your neighborhood. There you can learn cooperation along with stagecraft, and live like human beings instead of swelling the ranks of the hopeful unemployed.

There will never be too many good actors in the world, so learn your craft carefully. The picture industry spends thousands of dollars seeking talent in every field allied to the drama. Make yourself the biggest frog in your local puddle and Hollywood will come looking for you.

# How the Critics Look at the Movies

By HOWARD BARNES, OTIS FERGUSON and JAMES S. HAMILTON

*This is the third and last of the broadcasts reprinted in full from the National Board of Review's program of radio addresses. It was presented over New York City Station WNYC. Mr. Barnes is Film Editor of the New York Herald-Tribune; Mr. Otis Ferguson, Film Editor of the New Republic, and Mr. James S. Hamilton, Editor of the Exceptional Photoplays Dept. of the National Board of Review Magazine. Jack Mitchell, Chairman of the broadcast.*

**HAMILTON:** I can't help thinking that when you come to forming judgments about movies, you're in a field where everybody feels free and equal. I don't know anyone who isn't positive that his opinion about a movie is as good as anyone else's. If it's just a question of personal opinion, then every movie fan is a critic, and it's only when someone gets his opinions printed, and gets paid for them, that he's called a critic. I don't suppose, Mr. Ferguson, that you'd call a critic just someone who gets into print with his personal likes and dislikes?

**FERGUSON:** I would if he got paid for it—that's how I got my start. But ever since being a movie critic I've wondered how it felt to be a different kind of movie critic. You know the kinds: the newspaper men, the popular magazine men, the men on intellectual weeklies and monthlies who often collect their stuff into books even. Finally, the reviewers for trade magazines—a mysterious breed, almost as seldom seen as glass-blowers.

**HAMILTON:** How about your kind? I suppose you're an intellectual critic,

**FERGUSON:** I'm afraid so. Somehow we men on serious weeklies and monthlies get ourselves sort of apart from working newspapermen, so conscious of our book larnin and preoccupied with matters of weight. Many of us commune with art direct, for in this field brows are lofty and everybody lives upstairs.

**HAMILTON:** Sounds as though it might get lonesome up there.

**FERGUSON:** Well, I've always had a hankering to be with the boys in the back room myself. Just go out and cover a movie and call it a day. Your audience is there. Peo-

ple are interested in what you thought because the picture just opened and they went to know if that's a place to go that night.

**HAMILTON:** I think he's talking about you, Mr. Barnes. Is that all a newspaper critic does—cover a movie and call it a day?

**BARNES:** If Mr. Ferguson is implying that covering films for a weekly is tougher than doing the same job for a daily newspaper, he's badly mistaken. In the first place, in his job he doesn't begin to cover movies. Where he can pick and choose just about as he pleases, a newspaper reviewer is in there wrestling with five or six pictures a week, even if he has an assistant. Furthermore, where Mr. Ferguson has a limited audience (and I don't mean to run down the circulation of the New Republic) we have a potentially huge audience of conflicting tastes and backgrounds, which has to be remembered every time a film is reviewed.

**MITCHELL:** You've both been using the expression "cover the movies," Mr. Barnes. Do you mean that in the newspaper sense of just reporting what would come under the head of news about movies, or do you include something more in what you write about films?

**BARNES:** I don't think anyone could write specifically for the readers of a newspaper about such a controversial subject as screen entertainment. The best one can do is to try to cover a lot of aspects of a film. If you want to keep your sanity and self-respect you have to give your own personal opinion of a photoplay. But beyond that you have to try to give some indication of the box-office pull of the offering—in other words, estimate whether or not it is a good show. It is no more possible to dismiss or ignore a big pretentious production, as Mr. Ferguson might, than it would be for a reporter to pass up a story because he didn't like the people involved.

**FERGUSON:** All right, call me names. But here's a little background for you. When I started doing films for the New Republic



five years ago, you wouldn't believe what was expected of a highbrow critic—and being done regularly. First of all, he hustled around to all the little art cin-ee-mas to see the foreign films. Then he wrote a piece, and pretty elegant too, with words from foreign languages and everything. Then when he ran out of little cin-ee-mas, he viewed a Hollywood picture at random. He viewed with horror, or at best an amused condescension. Then he wrote another piece which proved, and proved it right up to your ears, that art lay a-molderin—or perhaps that capitalism wouldn't work—and very often both. It made quite an article either way. Readers read it and nodded their heads, feeling they'd really learned something. And then they did what we've all been doing all along; they went around to the neighborhood movie and had themselves a good time.

HAMILTON: But that was five years ago, you say——.

FERGUSON: Oh I was just going to leave that, but——

HAMILTON: Too late! Give Mr. Barnes a chance on present problems, will you?

BARNES: Few people seem to realize what a difficult job it is these days to review all of the important photoplays from Hollywood and foreign studios, as well as a lot of pictures that only their makers would have the nerve to call important. Theoretically, one should be a critic of all the arts, a fabulous linguist, an expert on all political, economic and philosophical trends, and a sure judge of winners. Since no one could possibly fill that bill, we newspaper reviewers have to do the best we can. Today we may have a Russian musical to cover, tomorrow a Hollywood historical drama, the next day an English social document. Mr. Ferguson can stick to the films he particularly fancies. We've got to take them as they come.

HAMILTON: That's what the National Board has to do, too, and I suppose we see more films than any critic ever does, except perhaps the reviewers on papers like the *Film Daily*. We see everything.

MITCHELL: You don't mean that you yourself see every picture that comes along?

HAMILTON: As nearly as a single human

being can. But I see them with review committees, and they are what count. They are all sorts of people, the people on these review committees, representing the general public, and what they register on their ballots is whether they like the film as entertainment or not. What they like is pretty sure to be worth recommending as popular entertainment, and goes on to a list of selected, recommended pictures we send out every week.

BARNES: Don't you do anything besides select and recommend—don't you ever criticize?

HAMILTON: We have a special committee that looks after what we call exceptional pictures—it's a group of critics, really, and out of their discussions of a particular film comes a critical review that tries to express their group opinion. There isn't much chance for personal biases and preferences to get very far in a group like that, and what they're chiefly looking for are the outstanding things, and particularly the forward steps, in pictures. If anyone took the trouble to hunt up the reviews the *National Board of Review Magazine* has been printing in the last twenty odd years he'd find a pretty complete record of the progress of the movies from year to year.

FERGUSON: Yes, and Mr. Hamilton has written most of those reviews only he wouldn't put that in the script. Go ahead, Mr. Barnes.

BARNES: I suppose the most difficult thing for a film reviewer is to keep a sustained and continuous point of view about what are sometimes called screen aesthetics. About the only way for a newspaper reviewer to do this is to address what he fondly thinks of as a particularly discriminating group of readers. To them, he can point out that a film, even if it promises to be hot stuff at the box office, represents no advance for the medium, or vice versa. It is not just film-goers whom he is addressing, but also the picture people.

MITCHELL: Do you think the people who make pictures pay any attention to critics?

BARNES: I am convinced that most of the craftsmen who write, direct, produce and act in films are extremely keen about finding out what a supposedly intelligent

person thinks of them. There was a time when screen reviewing amounted to no more than telling the plot of a production. I think it devolves upon a good reviewer today to analyze direction, subject matter, type of production and performances, as well as making a more or less complete report of the photographic properties of a motion picture.

HAMILTON: Mr. Ferguson, you got sidetracked a minute ago when you were talking about five years ago—

FERGUSON: You mean you pulled a knife on me. Anyhow I was on the verge of saying that film criticism has grown up since then, all around. Today you can give even intellectual-weekly audiences straight talk about movies. But what you and Mr. Barnes have been saying sounds pretty much like the problems of all criticism. Indeed, you've about summed up what every reviewer should look for when he looks at a picture. What I really had in the back of my head was the more subtle problem—such as wondering if I have an audience to talk to at all.

BARNES: There's something besides audiences you hear about, too—a lot of talk about the pressure from advertisers that is brought to bear on newspaper reviewers—not infrequently coming from men on the weeklies, who don't have their critiques surrounded by ads.

FERGUSON: Hey! Stop sniping, Mr. Barnes—you never got that from me. The less advertising the more editorial policy. Ever try to buck an editorial policy? Some fun.

BARNES: All I can say is that I've never been subjected to any pressure at all either from the editorial men or the advertising men. And the newspaper man's job is hard enough without that—he must primarily be a reporter, but he must also be an editorial commentator, a dabbler in all the arts and a business analyst. He even has to judge beforehand which of several films is the one for him to see and write about. At the moment, it seems to me that nothing could be easier than concentrating on a few significant films, writing them up for a more or less specialized audience, as Mr. Ferguson does, and having no chance of

kick-backs from showmen who are, after all, dealing in a commodity quite as much as an art.

FERGUSON: You see — everybody's got worries. But to get back to mine—it isn't enough just to report the current films when you're writing a piece only three or four times a month. No, you have to make an article of it. And if you think the movies an important and exciting thing, as I do, you've got to find something in the movies *worth* writing an article about. Smart-aleck speculation and other forms of columnist's ad-libbing won't do. Also there's little fun in kicking poor defenseless B pictures and super-spectacles when they're down. Naturally, you spend a good part of the time in a spot. When a good and exciting movie comes along (and plenty do) the thing is a snap. But there are always those periods when the movies have gone to sleep, and there is the old deadline stretching like a rubber band—and I for one can just see all my thirty-four readers daring me, saying: All right, you think movies are so important, go on and say just what is so very important in your little article this time. I still say it would be nice for a change to be down in the back room with the boys.

BARNES: You mean for good, Mr. Ferguson?

FERGUSON: No. Oh no. You wouldn't swap me, you know you wouldn't. And anyway, Mr. Barnes, you do make it sound like a lot of work.

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THE editors would be interested to know how many Councils and Chairmen have been taking time on the air for the purpose of broadcasting about motion pictures. We know some Councils broadcast information regarding selected films over their local stations, but we should like to have further information from them and from other groups regarding the scope of their broadcasting activities. With this information at hand we could publish from time to time the names of the Councils engaged in broadcasting, the type of programme, the name of the station, and the time at which listeners could find them on the air.



## Comment and Correspondence

THE October Discussion Topic put the following question to our readers: "Should the study of the motion picture in schools, colleges and universities occupy as important a place as literature, drama and music?" Our files show a number of comments from interested readers, all of which have some bearing upon the topic in question. While the question is not always fully answered in some of these, there is ample evidence that all the writers believe in the important role to be played by motion picture courses in the educational field.

Comments are printed below:

*From Dr. Frederic M. Thrasher, Professor of Education at New York University, and Director of the first N. Y. University course on the Motion Picture.*

I believe that the study of the motion picture by school children should begin as soon as the children begin to see movies. In later elementary grades it is most important that instruction be given in motion picture appreciation and discrimination, since I have found that a child's interest in school work is greatly stimulated by discussions of motion pictures. In High Schools this study should compose some part of formal English classwork, and extra-curricular activity along the line of movie clubs, which brings teacher and students together in a common interest, giving the teacher opportunities indirectly to guide the student in the understanding and appreciation of the motion picture.

As for the colleges, a word or two based on personal experiences may help to show the significance of motion picture courses. In the five years since the School of Education of New York University offered its pioneer course in motion picture appreciation on the college level, many universities, not only in the metropolitan area but throughout the United States, have undertaken to present similar courses. The genuine interest which hundreds and thousands of students have displayed in these courses has given an indication of a time not far distant when there will be a far more intelligent public for the motion picture. This public, by its constantly increasing patronage of more artistically adequate and sociologically valid pictures, will ultimately make an impression at the box-office which will be sufficient to encourage producers and artists to attempt more and more serious efforts than had been possible when most pictures had to be made for a mass audience. It will bring nearer the time when producers will be able to afford to spend money on pictures for the rapidly growing class audience.

*From Mr. Richard Woellhaf, Los Angeles, Cal. Mr. Woellhaf has long been interested in the study of the motion picture in his work as a member of the Department of Speech at Denison University. More recently he has helped in the establishment of a Motion Picture School in Los Angeles which has been assured of the support of the Los Angeles State Board of Education. As a result he has formulated the following plan for motion picture study in the university.*

MAY I present this brief discussion concerning the introduction of a *Division of Cinematography* as a branch of the college Department of Dramatics?

Most educators realize that the sound (and color) motion picture is potentially the greatest medium for teaching the world has ever seen. However, at the present time it is impossible to secure pictures in the quantity necessary for any widespread use in the educational system. The films made by various corporations, the reduced and re-edited versions of Major Studio features, and the films made and to be made especially for amateur release, are usually interesting and worthwhile, but can seldom fill more than the role of lunch hour entertainment. I am well aware of the fact that many colleges are making quantities of motion pictures, but, because of the lack of expert advice, the majority of them are poorly photographed, carelessly handled and edited, seldom indexed, and rarely reprinted.

*All serious motion picture work in the college should be done by the staff of experts in the division of cinematography. And the bulk of film to be used in the future for instructional purposes should emanate from the departments of specialization in the college.*

I have no statistics, but it is my guess that some thought about the "movies" is constantly present in the minds of children and young people. Even among adults it is noticeable how quickly conversation turns to a discussion of "pictures". "Who is going to play Scarlett O'Hara?" is almost as frequent a conversation starter as "Is it going to rain tomorrow?" Everyone seems to accept "pictures" by surface appearance, and, unlike the prudent storekeeper who rings each coin before accepting it, they never think of making a test for quality. In fact, there is pitifully little critical writing on this subject; most of it is either too technical or abstract, or is written too much from within the studio walls. The average movie goer has no idea of the vast potentialities of this new medium; he is shown one type of film only and when his interest lags, "Hollywood" whips him into action with "sound", with "color", with double features and with Banko. The movies began as a novelty and for the most part have kept popular because of expedient injections of novel features.

*The division of cinematography should, before all other duties, organize courses in motion picture appreciation, and assist the present*

*public organizations in the fight for more intelligent and mature pictures.*

Naturally the development of this new division should be gradual; it could not spring up over night even if that were what one desired. Teachers must be trained, equipment perfected and purchased, and the public acquainted with the purpose and service the organization has to offer. The logical junction is with the present University Theatre or Dramatics Department. The motion picture, more than anything else, is a Theatre Art and many of the courses and most of the physical equipment of the Theatre are needed by the student of Cinematography. In fact, the only subjects that need to be taught by the division are those relating to studio technique, motion picture appreciation, and film aesthetics. For example, subjects such as optics, sound, light; film composition (chemical), emulsions, development; dramatic construction and script writing, could best be taught in the Physics, Chemistry and English Departments. Another reason for branching from the Dramatic Department is the fact that so much instructional use can be made of the film in the training and coaching of actors, recording of scenes for study and the recording of major stage productions. The value of sound-on-film recordings of teaching methods in acting and direction, rehearsal technique, and technical direction, cannot be overstressed. I feel sure that a widespread use of such films by school and community theatres would aid greatly in improving the quality of their productions. One film record of a director actually rehearsing a scene, together with a record of the finished scene in production, would teach the student more than a thousand readings of that director's written theories.

*Perhaps the greatest service the division could offer would be a central bureau for the release of film to schools, clubs, churches and other organizations in the community.*

The Bureau could assemble all the good work from every college in the country on the basis of film exchange, and by careful handling and regular reprinting have a permanent library of inestimable worth to the community.

The usefulness of the sound and silent film seems unlimited and the main thought I wish to leave with you is the need for an expert group to coordinate all the film-making activities; to teach the courses in cinematography; to establish local bureaus for released and exchange film; and to act as the technical crew subject to call for special cinema work in any department of the university. Such an expert group would be found in the Division of Cinematography of the Dramatic Department.

*From Professor Sawyer Falk, Professor of Drama at Syracuse University.*

**I**N some academic quarters it is felt that the motion picture has no place in the cultural program of a university. Likewise it is frequently stressed by certain trade-papers of the motion picture industry that the university has no place meddling with the films, especially if such meddling insists that there is a definite aesthetic of the films which the majority of

so-called "entertainment" pictures fail to embrace.

I believe both these points of view are grievously wrong. The cinema is an art-form and, as such, is entitled to a place in any college curriculum along with the other art-forms: drama, music, painting, sculpture. It is true the films have not the corpus of fact and tradition that some of these others possess—especially dramatic art; yet, within the cinema are the attributes that can make great art as they have done on many occasions. These attributes and the values which result from them are, without any question as far as I'm concerned, entitled to classroom analysis. Moreover, it should be seen even by the purblind trade-papers that such a study might work to advantage at the box-office.

Add to all this the fact that the motion picture is a great social force—for good or evil as the case may be—but none the less a great social implement. It is certainly the obligation of every university to recognize this if for no other reason than as a phase of sociology. The universities raised the level of American stage-play audiences; there is no reason why they should not attempt to render a similar service to the cinema.

As to the courses which a university should offer in this field—first and foremost, cinema appreciation; then the technique of camera and studio; and then actual experimentation in film making.

*Miss Bertelle M. Lytle, film lecturer and editor of the Cleveland Cinema Club Bulletin, writes from her teaching experience:*

**S**HOULD the study of motion pictures in schools and colleges and universities occupy as important a place as literature, drama and music? As important as drama and music, yes. Just what we mean by the study of literature in the schools may need elucidation, but we should not give time to the study of individual motion pictures in any such way as we are accustomed to study individual examples of "literature". The crying need of the present is to have a definite conception of the function of pictures in life, and then fit them intelligently into the educational scheme.

Pictures parallel literature in many ways, not the least of which is that both serve to fill the leisure hour, both furnish information, inspiration, adventure, romance, comedy upon which we must rely chiefly for our recreation throughout life.

The school program, then, should be very careful not to associate pictures with educational values with the school room, lest the children learn to avoid them as "school work"—something to be left behind when schooldays are over. This has happened all too often with poetry, great novels, essays. Supervision of leisure time movie going, by suggestion, should be the chief method used in the schools. Up to the present I have heard of no complete plan through which schools may study the art of the motion picture; therefore, I propose one:

First of all we need national reviewing committees, with a thorough knowledge of the school curriculums, to furnish definite infor-



mation about all existing pictures which can be considered good art and helpful for pupils to see; in other words, make a "seeing list," graded just like reading lists. But pictures differ from books in that we are obliged to work always with current productions.

In the elementary grades: All teachers should keep informed about the pictures listed for their grades; and, as opportunity offers, arouse interest in pictures coming into the horizon of their pupils by comments (possibly illustrations) which will aid the pupils in a better appreciation of what they see. Teachers of social studies (geography and history), art, music, composition, literature, all have a part to play in this work.

In the junior high classes, the art and English teachers may easily include animated cartoons and short subjects as forms of the "fine arts," and thus begin the study of motion picture art as a separate field.

In the senior high school, in the tenth or eleventh year, the English course for all pupils should include about twenty days given to the study of the rudiments of art appreciation. Motion picture clubs, following the work of the Four-Star Clubs, should offer a delightful opportunity by which students can acquire a picture-art interest to carry over into later life—just as is done with the drama. For an elective English course, a semi-vocational course of an entire term (similar to the journalism course) can be offered in any large senior high school which owns and operates projection equipment, for showing many types of programs—for instance, any that have "noon movies." This class would have discussions, oral and written compositions based on movie problems, reviews of books and articles about picture art, reviews of pictures, advertising for pictures and special programs. Subjects to be studied would emphasize the various artists of the various fields of work and would include theatre management as illustrated by their school movie theatre.

In the University, the English department should offer one course (a general culture course counting for any one) which would prepare teachers to give adequate leadership in any of the work suggested above; and also would prepare parents for home and civic leadership. Careful thought should be given here to the social and educational psychology of films. Research work should be done upon problems encountered.

Advanced courses intended to develop artists and technicians need be given by only a very few universities—those near the great production centers.

Making a motion picture involves ownership of a motion picture camera, skill in its use, and an expense outlay, one or all of which will not be possible for the great majority of schools. This is no more necessary to a study of motion picture art than is a knowledge of printing and bookbinding to appreciation of literature.

#### COMMENT ON COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

THE Better Films Council of Grand Rapids, wishing to gain a wide expression of opinion, held a series of four open-to-the-public meetings dealing with the subjects of exhibitors'

viewpoint, viewpoint of the youth of today—by the juniors themselves—the producers' side of the question, and the parents' viewpoint.

Mrs. J. W. Livingston, President of the Council, tells of some of the parent's viewpoints as follows: "That pictures which were frightening to children had much less effect if viewed in the company of a parent; that no pictures were made for very young children; that neighborhood theaters were not to be used as convenient nurseries for young children; that the present local wave of juvenile crime is the result of the gangster films seen about five years ago when the now fifteen and sixteen-year old boys were at their most impressionable stage; that Sunday evening attendance at a motion picture showing is reflected Monday morning in sleepy, tired students in school; that the menace of double features defeats any attempt at discrimination in entertainment; that family discussion of films is the best method of teaching children discrimination, and after a few trials the child's allowance should cover his selection of motion picture entertainment; the fact that Shirley Temple topped all adult stars in box-office attractions was a very optimistic indication of the general trend in wholesome entertainment; and that the quality of such pictures as *Of Human Hearts*, *Judge Hardy's Children*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, to say nothing of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* will be a target for future productions to aim at." Here are enough viewpoints to start an interesting discussion in any group.

This Council also has considered the Discussion Topics suggested in this Magazine from time to time and in answer to the question "Does the box-office judgment show more intelligence than the critic?" agreed that, when high-pressure advertising was discounted, box-office judgment reflected more intelligence than the critic who frequently lets his pet irritations color his verdict. On the question "Would you like all your pictures to be in color?" the group was divided in opinion. Some liked the black and white as being easier on the eyes, and others were decidedly in favor of all-colored films. Mrs. Livingston expressed her personal vote "wholeheartedly in favor of color and more color, as its use makes the scene so much more vivid and realistic, and far more beautiful."

(Editor's note: This reminds us to say that comments on any of the topics which have been suggested in the past few months are welcomed whenever received.)

IT is a pleasure to record that Mrs. A. F. Burt of St. Louis has been appointed Motion Picture Chairman of the General Federation of Women's Clubs. Mrs. Burt brings to this office a most valuable background of experience, for she was organizer of the St. Louis Motion Picture Council in 1930 and long its President. She has served as Motion Picture Chairman of the Missouri Federation of Women's Clubs and of the National Council of Federated Church Women.

Her experience in all of these offices is shown in her plans for the work of the General Federation in such suggestions, among the many



to her chairmen, as the organization of a Better Films Committee or Council for the purpose of securing for the community the best in motion picture entertainment; the dissemination of information on current films through the public press, radio station, church, school and club bulletins, as well as civic organizations; seeking the cooperation of theatre owners and inaugurating in each theatre Friday night as family night, and arranging with the exhibitor desirable features and short subjects suitable for those programs.

Mrs. Burt has this to say on a subject which has been confusing to many active in Motion Picture Councils: "A problem confronting the motion picture industry as a whole, which has become very controversial in many groups, is the Neely-Pettengill bill, popularly designated to eliminate block booking and blind buying. Those of us who have been in close contact with the exhibitor know that block booking is not a consumer problem, nor is it a moral issue. The bill primarily attempts to affect contractual relations between the producer and exhibitor. The quality of the pictures, or their entertainment value, if affected at all would only be indirectly. Our interest in motion pictures has been to raise the standard of the product. At the present time 95 per cent of the films produced are recommended by the previewing groups. Since the exhibitor is permitted to cancel 10 per cent of his bookings under the block booking arrangement and thereby eliminate the undesirable and disapproved pictures from his purchases, it can readily be seen that legislation eliminating block booking will in no way aid the exhibitor in securing pictures of a higher standard."

A period of most worthwhile accomplishment in the Federated Clubs can be anticipated under Mrs. Burt's Chairmanship.

MRS. CLARENCE ECHOLS has long been interested in motion pictures in her city of Dallas and last fall centered this interest in the organization of a Motion Picture Council of which she is the Director. Working with her are many active officers.

She has written of the Council and its successful season as follows: "This Council was organized in October, 1937, with a membership of twenty-five. The officers of the Council consist of a director, telephone chairman, publicity chairman, secretary and library committee, educational committee. Meetings are held once a month in the screening room of the Majestic Theatre building.

An educational study course on pictures and problems of the motion picture industry was prepared and studied at each monthly meeting. This information was furnished on mimeographed pages and given to each member of the Council. From these pages each representative of the clubs took a report back to her group. Outstanding pictures, current and advance, were always discussed. No comment was ever made on the undesirable pictures. The subjects chosen for our study course were as follows, "History of motion pictures," "How to appreciate motion pictures," "The artistic side of motion pictures," "Selecting screen stories," "Research," "Films in foreign lands"

and others. These mimeographed pages, used as study material, are assembled in "units" and kept by each member in her special motion picture history book, started in the beginning of the year. These history books have become about as popular in Dallas, as the novel "Gone With the Wind". "After each member of the family has read it, then friends and neighbors want to read it," is what I am told by every member of the council, which makes me very happy, since I have the pleasure as well as responsibility of preparing it all.

My program beginning in September will present many prominent speakers, representing the church, the school, the P. T. A., civic workers, educational leaders and others interested in this particular work. As each speaker appears on the program, the group that he or she represents will be invited as guests of the council that day. For instance, when Dr. David Lefkowitz, one of Dallas' most outstanding rabbis, appears on the program, the Jewish Women's Council will be present as the guests, and so on through the year. In this way, we are able to acquaint most of Dallas with the work of the Council. A few of the subjects already assigned are as follows: "Motion Pictures as a Recreation," "The Photoplay as Literary Art"—this to be presented by an art teacher. "Music and the Films"—to be given by a music teacher. The art teacher and music teacher will represent the schools. One of the leading newspaper critics will talk on "The Essentials of a Good Motion Picture," and I, as director of the department of motion pictures for the Federated Church Women's Council, will represent the Protestant Church women, using as my subject "What is a better film?" This work has been my hobby for many years and I have a great desire to see "my Dallas Council" become the outstanding council of the United States."

Here is a challenge to other Councils which doubtless will not go unaccepted.

MRS. S. S. SUTHERLAND, Motion Picture Chairman of the Federated Church Women of Michigan, gives this optimistic statement in a recent letter: "Here in Detroit we are really going places. Great interest is being shown by leaders in various groups and we are having the full cooperation of the industry."

MRS. B. L. MEEK, President of the Knoxville (Tenn.) Motion Picture Council writes that at the beginning of the year she appointed chairmen of five new committees, Ballot, Library Contact, Exceptional Photoplay, Finance and Study Program.

A weekly Movie Guide for publication in the Sunday papers was started last July and Mrs. Meek reports that, in spite of some skepticism on the part of the editor and some Council members, it has been a success and expressions of gratitude have been heard. The Weekly Guide is displayed on attractive bulletin boards in the library also.

"Starting in January and continuing through May," she writes, "we will have one hour, following our business meeting, devoted to studying all activities concerning motion pictures. We have invited all clubs to send two repre-



sentatives to join our Council for this study. The speakers will be from our schools and universities. Their subjects will be "What Constitutes a Good Motion Picture," "Adaptation of Novels to Films," "Modern Trends in Educational Films," "Motion Picture Influences" and a talk, choosing her own subject, by Miss Harris, of the library.

Mrs. Meek states that Mrs. W. E. Bibee has given splendid service in her chairmanship activities, and her report, as Library Contact Chairman, on their extensive Book Week plans indicates this. She writes: "We are placing twenty-four posters in schools, theatres, stores, libraries, the Y. W. C. A. and the Y. M. C. A. Miss Nix, in charge of motion pictures activities at our city library, has arranged an attractive corner for us; a couple of the stores, the Y. W. C. A. and the theatres are also having effective displays. Dr. Harry Clark, Superintendent of our City Schools likes our essay idea and is personally presenting it to the schools. The high school pupils will write on "Why Films Based on Books Are Superior to Other Films" and Junior High pupils will write on "Why Book Films Are Liked Best." Mr. Street, theatre manager, is giving ten dollars and a liberal number of passes for prizes. He is also giving the Library and Council an attractive "flash" on our Book Week cooperation at his theatre. Two of the stores are giving books, and the Council is giving \$5.00 cash for prizes."

With a President untiring in her own activity and forming new Committees to call upon others for active participation we will no doubt have word of many future accomplishments to report from this Council.

MISS KATHRYN ALLEBACH, President of the Reading (Pa.), Motion Picture Forum had the program well outlined at the beginning of the season. The September meeting was devoted to the showing and discussion of a documentary film; October a panel discussion on Children's programs was led by members of the Forum; November Mr. Hal Hode of Columbia Pictures Corporation addressed the group. December is to be devoted to a discussion of study groups activities and materials, and January one of the local theatre managers will discuss and demonstrate short subjects. This varied program is certain to hold the interest of the many groups represented in the Forum.

MRS. A. S. TUCKER whose interest in the Louisiana Council for Motion Pictures dates back to her part in its organization in 1930 writes: "Our Council has grown steadily in interest and in membership. This was evidenced at the annual meeting held the latter part of April. There was an all day Conference with business session in the morning, followed by luncheon and a program in the afternoon. Very nearly one hundred attended. There were talks by outstanding individuals on different phases of Motion Picture Study. At the conclusion of the program a teaching film was shown, with remarks by our District Superintendent of Orleans Parish Schools. A feature of the Conference that created a lot of

interest was our Motion Picture Exhibit. There were displays of motion picture appreciation study, reviews, articles, scrap books, etc., amateur photography; industry and theatre displays; library bulletin board and National Board of Review Bulletins and Magazines; study guides, books and other articles."

Their program for this year shows new contacts and approaches with the universities and other groups, indicating their intention to continue to grow in interest and membership.

A GUIDE to the discussion and appreciation of the biographical film *The Life and Loves of Beethoven*, one in the series of Photoplay Studies published by Educational and Recreational Guides, has been compiled by Mr. Glenn M. Tindall, a member of the Review Committee of the National Board of Review. Mr. Tindall as former General Manager, Hollywood Bowl, and Supervisor of Municipal Music, Los Angeles, and at present Public Relations Consultant of the Symphony Society of Connecticut, is well equipped to prepare study material for this film which has for its theme music the Symphony in C Minor, with many other melodies from the Beethoven music also heard in the film. This Guide as well as the film is of interest to music clubs, Little Theatre groups, universities and schools. Mr. Tindall is preparing a Guide to *April Romance* based on the life of Franz Schubert.

A new motion picture publication is going to make its appearance with the new year. It is to be called "The Movies . . . and the People Who Make Them, a Consumer's Fact-Finding Service for Intelligent Movie-Goers." This title seems so self-explanatory we hardly need add what it is to be. Details of the plan and sample material can be secured by writing to Theatre Patrons, Inc., New Haven, Conn., the publishers. One of the contributors to this service will be Mrs. Wilder Tileston, who has written so interestingly and informatively in the New Haven Theatre Patrons Weekly, since its first publication in May, 1935.

A N editorial entitled "The New Impetus" in the current issue of "Cinema Progress" gives expression to the idea of the new vigor which will come to the motion picture as a result of the thousands of public school teachers, university professors, and lovers of cinema throughout the country studying, teaching and discussing the cinema. This issue of Cinema Progress also carries a variety of articles by Dudley Nichols, Zoe Akins, Ernst Vajda, Rudolf Arnheim, and other writers, directors, artists and scientists of the cinema.

Dr. Boris V. Morkovin, Editor of Cinema Progress, is interested in Motion Picture Councils and Forum Groups as those actually studying the motion picture and thus contributing to this new impetus, so he has arranged to make the publication available to Council members at a special rate. You can learn of this by writing to us or to Cinema Progress, Box 74, 3551 University Avenue, Los Angeles, California.

# EXCEPTIONAL PHOTOPLAYS

## DEPARTMENT

This department seeks to include all photoplays of outstanding merit in the artistic development of the screen, with the object of bringing such pictures to the attention of discriminating readers, under the headings of *Exceptional and Honorable*

*Mention.* The opinions of a committee composed of trained students and critics of the screen are combined in an impartial review which aims to convey a comprehensive idea of the picture, covering both its excellencies and defects.

SECRETARY AND EDITOR, JAMES SHELLEY HAMILTON

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## The Beachcomber

Adapted by B. Van Thal from W. Somerset Maugham's "Vessel of Wrath," directed by Erich Pommer, photographed by Jules Kruger, settings by Tom Morahan, music by Richard Addinsell. A Laughton-Pommer, Mayflower Production, distributed by Paramount Pictures, Inc.

### The cast

Ginger Ted .....	Charles Laughton
Martha Jones .....	Elsa Lanchester
Reverend Jones .....	Tyrone Guthrie
The Controleur .....	Robert Newton
Lia .....	Dolly Mollinger
Kati .....	Rosita Garcia
Sergeant Henrik .....	J. Solomon
Dutch Sea Captain .....	Fred Groves
Native Head Clerk .....	Eliot Makeham
Ho .....	Ma Foo
Ah King .....	Fey On
Albert .....	D. J. Ward
Mechanic .....	S. Alley

IT'S been a long time since the screen has seen such sheer *virtuoso* work as *The Beachcomber*. Reduced to action, it is the story of the struggle between an utterly unmoral man and a completely repressed woman. But this is neither as serious nor tragic as it sounds, because the woman is a caricature, the man is fantastic and the outcome absurdly comic. If Mr. Laughton chose Somerset Maugham's "Vessel of Wrath" as the first production of his Mayflower Pictures Corp. because at last he was free from Hollywood's restrictions and could say what he wanted, he says nothing new—to us or Hollywood. Rather, I suspect he chose it because it provided a whopping good part for his abundant talents. At any rate, as an actor who has had many whopping good parts, he performs the extraordinary feat of making his Ginger Ted superior in virtuosity to his Rembrandt, Nero, Barrett, Henry VIII, Javert and even Capt. Bligh. He has never been more sure of himself or happier in his role. He gives

it the works, from the very first shot showing him sprawled in the sun like a jellyfish, through the Mack Sennett hilarity of the riot at the shopkeeper's, to his absurd respectability at the end.

The virtuosity is not all Mr. Laughton's. Elsa Lanchester (Mrs. Laughton) comes on the screen teaching native children how to enunciate: "Here we go gathering nuts in May." We see her walking through the lavish profusion of a tropical island as if she had a ram-rod for a spine. She says such things as: "Mr. Controleur, is not nature wonderful? It's so—er, natural." As Miss Martha Jones, she is ridiculous, pitiful, funny, tragic, awkward and charming—all at the same time. Her Ann of Cleves and her bride of Frankenstein gave no hint of such talents. She emerges quite the equal of her husband.

The two other principals, Robert Newton and Tyrone Guthrie, are excellent as the lonely Controleur and the Reverend Jones. Guthrie was at his best when he smeared Ginger Ted with his gratitude for his conduct when stranded with his sister on an island, Newton when he tried to explain to Miss Jones that the cause of Ginger Ted's avoidance of her was not lack of clothes. The rest of the cast is made up of natives.

Part of the virtuosity was Jules Kruger's photography, which was so sharp—particularly in close-up—as to have a third-dimensional quality. And Erich Pommer, who directed, is no amateur himself, though one felt Laughton's hand in the direction too. The original score by Richard Addinsell is too good not to list among the many excellencies of this film.

R. G.

*Rated Exceptional.*





*The new engineer shows up for his first meal on board the sub-chaser.*

## Submarine Patrol

*Adapted from a book by Ray Millholland by Rian James, Darrel Ware and Jack Yellen, directed by John Ford, photographed by Arthur Miller. Associate producer, Gene Markey. Produced and distributed by Twentieth Century Fox.*

### *The cast*

Perry Townsend III .....	Richard Greene
Lieut. Drake .....	Preston Foster
Susan Leeds .....	Nancy Kelly
Captain Leeds .....	George Bancroft
Spuds .....	Slim Summerville
Sails .....	J. Farrell MacDonald
Rocky .....	Warren Hymer
Brett .....	Douglas Fowley
Johnny Miller .....	Dick Hogan
Olaf .....	Ward Bond
Kelly .....	Charles Tannen
Professor .....	Elisha Cook, Jr.
Irving .....	George E. Stone
Sparks .....	Robert Lowery
Guns McPeck .....	Jack Pennick
McAllison .....	John Carradine
Luigi .....	Henry Armetta
Anne .....	Joan Valerie
Joe Duffy .....	Mazie Rosenbloom
Rear Admiral Maitland ..	Charles Trowbridge
Captain Strong .....	Moroni Olsen
Chaplain .....	Victor Varconi

**I**T may depend on how important the plot seems, what you think of this picture.

If all you see in it is the rich boy plus poor girl plus heavy-father business (and Richard Greene rather too much like the winner of a pretty boy contest, with more than a hint of cockney in his accent, to seem the real thing in playboy but patriotic American lads) you are likely to overlook the fact that John Ford, at his top one of the best, has made his best film in many a long moon. And not merely because he has made exciting stuff out of the submarine encounters, which are also not novel material for such a story as this.

The film's chief virtue (apart from being generally pretty swell entertainment) is historical, and a sturdy virtue it is. Not so much in its aspect of picturing one unsung section of the American navy in operation in the Great War, as in its vivid, authentic, down-to-earth report of how countless Americans went to war. The first moments of the film set the key: blaring bands,

marching uniforms, shouts and streamers, with Howard Chandler Christy recruiting-posters superimposing their slyly dubious comment on all the din and excitement that was sweeping multitudes into a fever to get into the big adventure—then the turmoil and confusion of the navy yard and the eternal slogans of the enlisted man: "When do we eat?" "Where do we go from here?"

From then on Mr. Ford proceeds with sure knowledge and artful craftsmanship in the creation of the little world that existed on a 110-foot sub-destroyer sent to convoy a fleet of supply ships to the Mediterranean. The most fascinating thing about it is the conglomeration, the gradual working into an effective working unit, of a fantastically heterogeneous mixture of green rookies, with only five seasoned men to pound into them what to do and how to do it. There is a romance entangled with it all, of course, pretty banal in its essentials but lightened with unhackneyed touches and cleverly fitted into the main business of life aboard the sub-chaser, failing to be as good as it might have been for lack of just the right backbone to make the handsome young man into something more than a stereotyped movie hero. Back of this romantic trimming, however, and easily carrying it in its stride, is the racy, flesh-and-bone life of the crew, the taxi-driver, coffee-pot keeper, pants-presser, runaway messenger boy, bespectacled biology undergraduate, rich man's son, demoted commander, old-time seaman, from all parts of the city and country; from all kinds of homes or no homes at all, distinct, clashing personalities and individuals of just the sort that are swept into the enlisted ranks of army or navy, thrown together in the daily grind of keeping afloat and hunting submarines. It all builds up and grows, the effective ones getting expert in the engine room, at the guns or the wireless, the others learning places where they can help, or at least not get too much in the way, till at the last they can do an efficient job of war-making, all working together as they should. And it ends in a grand burst of battle, the boat sneaking through floating mines in one of the mists Ford is so fond of, to shell a notorious enemy submarine in its hiding-place.

And a fine burst of comradeship and fellow-feeling all around. And not a single serious casualty on our side.

So the film has something for everybody—love-story and humor (a lot of the humor that rare kind that sprouts out of frank human nature) and exciting action and truthfulness of characterization. Perhaps the abundance of popular appeal in it may obscure its more unusual qualities for the casual movie-seer.

John Ford has done an excellent job. He had expert assistance, especially from the men who supplied the dialogue and incidental business, men who obviously know the thing whole—people, things, movement, on this kind of ship, the way they act and talk. But Ford is the one who has taken everything and woven it together, keeping the thing whole, people, things, movement, sound—going on and up the way good movies ought to go. When film-worn actors become fresh and alive again—such people as Warren Hymer, Slim Summerville, George E. Stone, Douglas Fowley, J. Farrell MacDonald and all the other men on the boat who have been repeating themselves over and over in a rut of countless other pictures—it's a safe bet that a director has them in hand who can make human beings out of his puppets. Oddly enough, this seems to apply only to the ship and its affairs—in the hotel scene Henry Armetta careens about with his most obvious mannerisms more exaggerated than ever. Perhaps Mr. Ford is happiest when he is aboard a ship. May he get another one soon!

J. S. H.

*Rated Honorable Mention.*

## Ballerina

*Adapted from Paul Morand's "La Mort du Cygne" by Jean Benoit-Levy and Marie Epstein, directed by Jean Benoit-Levy, photographed by L. H. Burel, settings by Carre and Negre, choreography by Serge Lifar, ballet music by Chopin and Gounod, incidental music by J. E. Szyfer. English titles by Julian Leigh. Production Cinatlantica, distributed by Arthur Mayer and Joseph Burstyn.*

### *The cast*

Nathalie Karine .....	Mia Slavenska
Mlle. Beaupre .....	Yvette Chauvire
Rose Souris .....	Janine Charrat
Celestine .....	Mady Berry





Janine Charrat  
and  
Mia Slavenska  
in  
"Ballerina"

Madame Souris ..... France Ellys  
Madame Bijou ..... Claire Gerard  
Coco Battut ..... Jacqueline Queffelec  
Clara Bijou ..... Micheline Boudet  
Mephisto ..... Andre Pernet

with

Corps de Ballet and Dancers of the School of  
the National Opera of France.

JEAN BENOIT-LEVY has a unique genius for making children, especially little girls, human and natural on the screen. He did it in *La Maternelle*, and he has done it again in *Ballerina*. In each film he took a child more than ordinarily subject to intensely emotional loyalties and jealousies, put her in a group of ordinary children, and set the plot to work. He is quite successful at that sort of thing.

The background of *Ballerina* is the children's ballet school of the Paris Opera, and the central figure of the film is a homely little pupil with great talent, and even greater ambition, for dancing. Ballet possesses her, body, mind and soul, and her

idol and divinity is the lovely *première danseuse* of the Opera. When a rival appears, with the possible threat of eclipsing her idol, she unfastens a trap-door in the stage so that the newcomer falls through and breaks her leg, her dancing career ended.

Here is a very special drama in a peculiarly special setting: it couldn't have happened in any other setting. It can seem important only by making the back-stage life of ballet dancers, with its utter absorption in their art, understandable and something to be sympathized with. When Benoit-Levy has done that (and he does it) there is potential tragedy of a very poignant kind in wait for both the people involved in the contrived accident of the trap-door. For small Rose Souris, who for a time can stifle her conscience with the conviction that what she did was justified to keep a great artiste in her proper place

as first dancer of the ballet, there is the gradual realization that Mlle. Beaupre wasn't worth it: she was only a dancer who danced till she found something better to do—marriage; and that Karine, whose life has been wrecked, who can dance no more, was the one really consecrated to her art. For a small girl who knows nothing, thinks nothing, feels nothing, outside her tiny world of dancing, all this is terribly important, and her growing passion of remorse is not so much for having hurt a human being as for depriving an artiste of living her art, an utterly unforgivable sin. And as for Karine, limping about with her cane, hopelessly embittered, she sees nothing ahead of her but tragic uselessness, for teaching, the only thing left for her, is worse than no substitute for the lost joy of dancing herself. For these people, to live is to dance.

It all comes to an understanding in the end—Rose gets forgiveness and passes her examinations triumphantly, and Karine finds in her gifted young pupil a vicarious way of carrying on her own life.

It is no surprise to find Benoit-Levy handling the children in this film with an expressiveness that is a combination of simplicity and subtlety, not only Rose with her passionate artistic devotion, so interwoven into all her feelings toward other people and life itself, but the other, less complex children, and the mothers who are such a colorful background to them. But all this skill in delineation would be lost, like making people talk in a tongue we couldn't understand, if he had not managed to re-create the world of ballet in which they live, apart from which they would be incomprehensible. The actual dancing that is put on the screen as spectacle is no great shakes (what could be made of a detached ballet from *Faust* anyway?), stretched out a bit, and rather tiresomely so, beyond its usefulness in the plot. As a matter of fact the screen hasn't learned yet how to project what living dancers can give us except, to some degree, in the case of Fred Astaire. But *Ballerina* does, as Degas did though not the way he did, evoke the magic and glamor of that ethereal, utterly unreal thing of motion and music that is ballet. Just

glimpses—of rehearsal, of practice steps, of tawdry scenery, of a foot skimming over a crack in the floor—countless prosaic details, linking together to make alive and plausible that little realm of art whose devotees struggle so heart-breakingly, and triumph—if at all—so beautifully and evanescently. J. S. H.

*Rated Honorable Mention.*

## Professor Mamlock

*Scenario by Friedrich Wolf, Adolph Minkin and Herbert Rappaport, from Friedrich Wolf's play, directed by Adolph Minkin and Herbert Rappaport, music by Y. Kochurov and M. Timofeyev. Produced by Lenfilm, distributed by Amkino.*

### *The cast*

Professor Mamlock	S. Mezinski
Mrs. Mamlock	E. Nikitina
Rolf Mamlock	O. Zhakov
Dr. Hellpach	V. Chessnokov
Dr. Karlsen	B. Svetlov
Dr. Inge	N. Shaternikova
Dr. Wagner	I. Zonne
Nurse Yadwiga	M. Tagianossova
Werner Seidel	V. Kisselev
Fritz	Y. Tolubeyev
Willi	G. Budarov
Ernst	P. Kirilov
Hilda	A. Zarzhitskaya
Peter	S. Ryabinskii
Mother Wendt	N. Faussek
Anni, her daughter	T. Guretskaya
Krause	V. Merkuriev
The Colonel	Y. Malutin
Storm Trooper	P. Sukhanov

THIS is one of those films that depend for its final effect on how much one reads the papers. It might seem just another of those Soviet self-justifications by attack, in this instance using Nazi persecution of the Jews as its object; an incredible picture of fanatical terrorism, did not the time give it proof. The follower of the news knows that what happens on the screen to Professor Mamlock isn't a spot on what happens daily in Germany. (The news-conditioned mind also has in back of it a disturbing little intimation that the pot is trying to give the kettle a black eye.)

The period of the screen-story is that of the Reichstag fire, the incidents centering around the effects of the brown-shirt fury on an eminent Jewish surgeon, a scientist far removed from what he considers mere political bickerings. At the head of a hospital, devoted to healing and the hu-



manitarian pursuit of science, he lumps National Socialism and Communism and all the other isms together as unimportant little eddies in the great, vital stream on which his life-work is launched, curing human beings of their physical ills. His son Rolf is turning to something different: he sees what Germany is headed for under the growing power of Hitler, that there are ills worse than physical ills to be fought and cured before they become fatal. With other young people he is engaged in the dangerous underground business of spreading revolt against the despotic terrorism that is getting the country in its grip.

What happens to this father and son makes up the story: the growing separation of interests between them, the father trying to persuade the son back into the saner, more abiding life of science, the son forced by his convictions to choose the more active and perilous course of fighting against oppression; till the vengeance for the Reichstag fire strikes, and the great surgeon becomes one of its victims. It is a story told with tremendous theatrical skill: you will rarely see anything more effective than the hounding of the professor through the streets in his white surgeon's robe, an inevitable reminiscence of the road to Calvary, or the scene in which Rolf and his friend, pretending to be strangers, are faced with each other in prison to betray each other, with the insanely ferocious little Hitlerite slashing their clasped hands apart with his sword.

It is all stunning and shocking, and the shock of it is reinforced by the knowledge that it is all true, that it is only a milder part of the actual truth. Yet, strangely enough, the shock is softened by an inescapable awareness that this picture is following a pattern all too familiar; though the explicit propaganda for communism is at a minimum, voicing itself at the end in a powerful plea for tolerance and democracy, there is the same "conversion" element in it so often one of the chief elements in Soviet films (here it is the professor who is converted, too hurriedly and obviously to convince the feelings), the same complete absorption of the young people (those in the right) in their cause, an

absorption either too superhuman or too sub-human to compel the instinctive sympathy of the neutral on-looker, and at the end the same fiery speech, climaxing the picture with a ringing fade-out to bring the comrades cheering to their feet. These are the Russian equivalents to what is frowned upon as the Hollywood formula, and they would be easily overlooked if there were characters, even one character, so vitally individual and alive that one could forget he represented an idea, a thread in the pattern. Somehow, in spite of unexceptionable acting, the characters in this film do not seem that real.

But above all that is the fact that here is a picture which, alone of all pictures we have seen or are likely to see, tackles a subject that is of more supreme importance than any other in the world today, and tackles it with a realistic power which the Russians more than anyone else know how to bring to the screen.

J. S. H.

*Rated Honorable Mention.*

## Those Dirty-faced Angels

IT would seem that there was not much more to be said on the screen, in the way the screen seems to have to say things, about slum boys growing up into criminals, yet the new Cagney-O'Brien picture, *Angels with Dirty Faces*, manages to give vigor and a certain sort of freshness to a more than twice-told tale. There is a difference in plot, but all the old elements are there: the youngsters caught by the glamor of successful crime, with nothing in their impoverished lives to counteract that glamor. It is hard to dramatize any successful rescue from such a situation, and the device used in this film (it must have looked like such a bright idea on paper!) seems pretty phoney, even while under the spell of the acting of it: a gang of as skeptical young roughnecks as the Dead End Kids can be is supposed to be diverted from their impending life of crime by reading in the papers that their hero turned yellow before going to the chair. The big theatrical kick is that Cagney didn't really turn yellow, he only pretended to for

the sake of its effect on the kids. Probably the kids didn't believe it any more than the audience does.

But here are Cagney and O'Brien and the kids in their best form, and if this could be taken as a farewell appearance for this particular kind of thing, though it isn't exactly a climax it would deserve a hearty round of applause. But we don't need any more repetitions of it. J. S. H.

## SELECTED PICTURES GUIDE

(Continued from page 2)

- aging type has a horse with which she eventually wins a big purse. Columbia.
- fj LITTLE TOUGH GUYS IN SOCIETY** — Mary Boland, Edward Everett Horton, Mischa Auer, Helen Parrish. Original screenplay by Edward Eliscu and Mortimer Offner. Directed by Erle Kenton. An amusing comedy of six East Side hoodlums who visit a wealthy woman in order to cure her small son of laziness. Plenty of action and well acted by the entire cast. Universal.
- f NANCY DREW, DETECTIVE** — Bonita Granville. Story by Carolyn Keene. Directed by William Clemens. A smart school girl runs down a gang of kidnapers with the help of a youthful boy-friend. The story is entertaining, despite lack of conviction in plot and work-out, and is likely to prove popular with younger audiences. Warner Bros.
- f NEXT TIME I MARRY**—Lucille Ball, James Ellison, Lee Bowman. Original screen story by Thomas Williamson. Directed by Garson Kanin. A farce comedy, a sort of modern "Taming of the Shrew" with likeable main characters and a lot of colorful minor ones. The direction is particularly good. RKO Radio.
- f OUT WEST WITH THE HARDYS**—Mickey Rooney, Lewis Stone, Cecilia Parker, Fay Holden. Screenplay by Kay Van Riper based on characters created by Aurania Rouverol. Directed by George B. Seitz. The two young Hardys and their father meet and solve different problems out on a ranch. As human and likeable as usual, but less spontaneous than the earlier stories of the series and much more preachy. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- m PEG OF OLD DRURY**—Anna Neagle, Sir Cedric Hardwicke. Original screen story by Miles Malleon. Directed by Herbert Wilcox. Dublin and London in the days of David Garrick and Peg Woffington. Interesting as a picture of its times, but pretty rather than real, without a great deal of solid substance to it. (British Production). Recommended for schools or libraries. Tri-National Films.
- f ROAD DEMON** — Henry Armetta, Henry Arthur, Joan Valerie. Original screen story by Robert Ellis and Helen Logan. Directed by Otto Brower. A pleasant and fresh treatment of the auto-race plot, with the Gambini family building up promisingly as the center of a series. 20th Century-Fox.
- m SECRETS OF A NURSE**—Edmund Lowe, Dick Foran, Helen Mack. Based on the story "West Side Miracle" by Quentin Reynolds. Directed by Arthur Lubin. A story of two men in love with the same girl, the younger one accused of murder and the older one his lawyer. Dramatic in spots with some good acting. Universal.
- m SHINING HOUR**—Joan Crawford, Margaret Sullavan, Melvyn Douglas, Robert Young, Fay Bainter. Based on the play by Keith Winter. Directed by Frank Borzage. The dramatic clash between a night-life glamor girl and the conservative mid-western family into which she marries. Bright and sophisticated but genuinely moving, with top-notch acting and direction. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- m SINGING BLACKSMITH, THE** — Moishe Oysher. Adapted from play "Yankel der Schmidt." Directed by Edgar G. Ulmer. Greatly superior to most films for Yiddish audiences; on the long side and heavy with detail, but often very moving and containing some fine singing. English subtitles. New Star Films, Inc.
- f \*SIXTY GLORIOUS YEARS**—Anna Neagle, Anton Walbrook, C. Aubrey Smith. Original screen story by Miles Malleon and Robert Vansittart. Directed by Herbert Wilcox. Covers much of the material of "Victoria the Great" with much the same cast. It puts more emphasis on Britain's imperial growth than on the private life of the sovereigns, and does it in color with regal brilliance. Walbrook as the Prince is excellent, and Anna Neagle as the aged queen human and impressive. (British Production). Recommended for schools and libraries. Worth keeping permanently available. RKO Radio.
- f SPRING MADNESS**—Lew Ayres, Maureen O'Sullivan, Burgess Meredith. Based on play "Spring Dance" by Philip Barry. Directed by S. Sylvan Simon. A comedy of young romance and college life—the conspiracy of a girl's friends to straighten out her love affair. The best college-life picture that has been made, with a lot of bright and attractive young people who are something like the real thing. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f STORM OVER BENGAL**—Patric Knowles, Richard Cromwell, Rochelle Hudson. Original screen story by Dudley Walters. Directed by Sidney Salkow. Nothing much new in subject matter, with the British army mopping up plotting Indian princes. But the story moves with speed and effect; love interest and plenty of action are well bound together. Republic.



f **STRANGE FACES**—Frank Jenks, Dorothea Kent, Andy Devine. Screenplay by Charles Grayson. Directed by Errol Taggart. Frank Jenks and Dorothea Kent make a swell team as rival reporters whose squabbles forever keep them apart. Their entertainment value should be more widely recognized. In this story they are involved in tracking down the double of a murdered man, who is cashing in on the corpse's lost opportunities. Speedy comedy-melodrama. Universal.

f **\*SUBMARINE PATROL**—See Exceptional Photoplays Dept., page 17.

f **TORCHY GETS HER MAN**—Glenda Farrell, Barton MacLane. Original screen story by Albert DeMond. Directed by William Beaudine. Torchy helps, in spite of the police, to run down a gang of counterfeiters. Brisk and entertaining. Warner Bros.

f **\*YOUNG IN HEART, THE**—Janet Gaynor, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Paulette Goddard. Novel by I. A. R. Wylie "The Gay Banditti." Directed by Richard Wallace. A fresh and engaging comedy about what happened when a charming family of gold-diggers attached themselves to a rich and lonely old lady. Bright talk and situations, and a splendid cast including Roland Young, Billie Burke, Minnie Dupree and Richard Carlson. United Artists.

## SHORT SUBJECTS

### INFORMATIONALS

- fj **ATHLETIC ODDITIES**—Amusing record of out-of-the-ordinary sports from all over the world. 20th Century-Fox.
- fj **\*BIRD DOGS** (RKO Pathe Sportscope)—A most interesting and attractive account of how bird dogs are trained. RKO Radio.
- f **COSTA RICA**—Some beautiful scenes of Costa Rica. Paramount.
- fj **DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, THE** (Technicolor Specials)—How our fundamental document was written and adopted. Vitaphone.
- fj **GOING PLACES WITH GRAHAM MacNAMEE NO. 56**—The beauties of Puerto Rico. Recommended for schools or libraries. Universal.
- fj **GOING PLACES WITH GRAHAM MacNAMEE NO. 57**—Showing the Yellowstone Park as Nature's wonderland. Recommended for schools or libraries. Universal.
- fj **GOING PLACES WITH GRAHAM MacNAMEE NO. 58**—Windmills old and new; the Island of Corsica. Recommended for schools or libraries. Universal.
- f **GRID RULES** (Pete Smith Specialty)—How some of the football rules came to be made. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f **HOW ON ICE** (Pete Smith Specialty)—Interesting, about hockey. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f **IMMORTAL BRUSH, THE** (Technicolor Specials)—About famous paintings. Vitaphone.
- fj **JAIPUR—THE PINK CITY** (Fitzpatrick Travel-talk)—About the City of Jaipur, in India, in excellent color. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- fj **\*MAN'S GREATEST FRIEND**—About dogs, and especially what they have contributed to the solution of human problems about disease, with an episode on Louis Pasteur. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f **\*MARCH OF TIME NO. 3, THE** (5th Series)—"Inside the Maginot Line". A fascinating glimpse into the interior of France's first line of defense with careful treatment of its technicalities. Includes resume of the military training compulsory for every youth. Done with the

usual excellence of these instructive series which never fail to grasp the essentials of a subject. RKO Radio.

- f **MECHANIX ILLUSTRATED** (Colortour Adventure)—About weather-forecasting; isolating vitamins; how fire departments work; television. Vitaphone.
- fj **MIRACLE OF SALT LAKE, THE** (MGM Miniatures)—An episode in the struggle of the Mormons to settle the great Salt Lake Desert—the plague of insects and the visit of seagulls in answer to Brigham Young's prayer. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f **PARAMOUNT PICTORIAL NO. 4**—How they discover oil wells in the modern method; Southern resorts for winter sports. Paramount.
- f **\*PASSING PARADE NO. 1**—Excellent pictorial essays on three subjects: the millions of unclaimed money that lies in banks; the life history of an automobile and where the junk finally goes, and "mail-order marriage." Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f **POPULAR SCIENCE NO. 2**—Scientific experiments in various fields. Paramount.
- f **STRANGER THAN FICTION Nos. 56, 57, 58**—Each contains about ten strange items of living news, varying from hobbies and out-of-the-ordinary occupations to unusual places of business, queer customs and other strange odds and ends found in domestic and foreign life. Interesting. Universal.
- f **SUPER ATHLETES** (Grantland Rice Sport-lights)—Showing the difference between the old time athlete and the modern. Paramount.
- f **TABLE MANNERS**—Fine exhibition of table tennis. Vitaphone.
- f **\*THEY LIVE AGAIN**—How two doctors—Banting and Best, with the help of Gilchrist—discovered and perfected insulin, the remedy for the scourge of diabetes. Recommended for schools or libraries. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- f **TITANS OF THE DEEP**—An expedition for tropical undersea exploration made by Dr. William Beebe and Otis Bartin, with the bathysphere to work in. Grand National.

### CARTOONS AND COMEDIES

- fj **BABY KITTENS**—A dog adopts three little kittens until the mother cat makes trouble for him. Universal.
  - fj **DATE TO SKATE, A** (Popeye the Sailor Cartoon)—The sailor takes Olive Oyl to roller skate. Paramount.
  - j **DISOBEDIENT MOUSE, THE** (Walter Lantz Cartoon)—What happens to mice who don't obey their mommas. Universal.
  - f **FOOTBALL ROMEO** (Our Gang)—Alfalfa, of Our Gang, is jockeyed into being a football hero by Darla. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
  - fj **NIGHT WATCHMAN, THE**—A kitten's amusing adventures protecting the house from mice. Vitaphone.
  - fj **\*SOCIETY DOG-SHOW** (Walt Disney Cartoon)—Mickey Mouse and Pluto go to a ritzy dog-show. RKO Radio.
  - f **STRANGER RIDES AGAIN, THE** (Terry-Toons)—Funny burlesque of the serial type of outdoor melodrama. 20th Century-Fox.
  - f **YOU'RE AN EDUCATION**—Bright cartoon, in which travel ads come to life. Vitaphone.
- MUSICALS, NOVELTIES AND SERIALS**
- f **DUDE RANCH** (Reelisms)—What happens on a dude ranch. RKO Radio.
  - f **HAL KEMP AND HIS ORCHESTRA**—Some very nice music supplied by this orchestra. Paramount.
  - f **MERLE KENDRICKS AND HIS ORCHESTRA** (Melody Masters)—Unusual arrangements. Vitaphone.
  - f **OPENING DAY** (Robert Benchley)—Substituting for the mayor, Robert Benchley opens the baseball season by throwing the first ball out. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
  - f **ROBBIN' GOOD**—Puis Zagone gives an interesting and instructive exhibition of how card cheating and fixed gambling devices are operated. Vitaphone.
  - fj **SCOUTS TO THE RESCUE** (Serial) Nos. 1-2. Jackie Cooper, David Durand, Bill Codey, Jr. Directed by Ray Taylor. A story about Boy Scouts. Universal.
  - f **TOOLS OF THE LAW** (Floyd Gibbons "Your True Adventure" Series)—One of Floyd Gibbons' real life episodes, how two brothers were cleared of a murder charge.

## NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW OF MOTION PICTURES

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures is a citizen body, organized in 1909 by the People's Institute of New York City as a medium for reflecting intelligent public opinion regarding a growing art and entertainment. This is still the Board's function, together with that of disseminating information on the subject of motion pictures and carrying on a constructive program having to do with community cooperation in the advancement and uses of the motion picture.

The National Board is opposed to legal censorship and is in favor of the community better films plan of placing emphasis upon and building support for the finer and more worthwhile films. It is at all times glad to cooperate with any agency to encourage and guide the motion picture in developing its possibilities both as recreation and as entertainment.

It carries on its work through various committees. All members of the committees serve without pay. No member is connected with the motion picture industry. They are representative of varied interests and activities and many are connected with large public welfare organizations or educational institutions.

The General Committee is a body evolved out of the original group organized in 1909. It is the appeal and central advisory committee of the National Board to which policies are referred and to which decisions of the Review Committee regarding pictures may be carried either by the producers or by the Review Committee itself.

The Executive Committee is composed of members of the General Committee and is the directing body of the National Board, charged with the formulation of policies, the election of members, the expenditure of funds and supervision of all administrative affairs.

The Review Committee is a large group of 300 members carrying on the work of reviewing the films. It is divided into sub-groups which meet for review per schedule during each week in the projection rooms of the various motion picture companies.

The Membership Committee supervises the membership list of the Review Committee and recommends the names of proposed new members for consideration by the Executive Committee.

The Committee on Exceptional Photoplays is composed of critics and students of the cinema interested particularly in encouraging the artistic development of the motion picture. It reviews and publishes a critique of the finest films and assists community groups in the showing of unusual films to special audiences. Its pioneer activity has done much to lay the foundation for the Little Photoplay Theatre movement and "to stimulate the organization of subscription groups to develop audiences for the support of the creative achievements of the screen.

## NATIONAL MOTION PICTURE COUNCIL

The community or field work of the National Board of Review is conducted under its National Motion Picture Council, through affiliated membership groups, service contact groups and correspondents throughout the country. The National Council assists in the organization and program of work of local groups which are usually called Councils.

These Councils follow a plan initiated by the National Board in 1916 of having a membership composed of representatives from many organizations, cultural, educational, recreational, religious, and civic, so that they typify the original movement for community participation in the development and best use of the motion picture as recreation and education.

The objectives of such organizations are as follows:

To demonstrate through the education of public opinion, the effectiveness of selection and classification, instead of censorship, as a means of forwarding the development of the motion picture and its best uses.

To encourage through open meetings, forums, classes and other means, the study of the motion picture as a medium of entertainment, education and artistic expression.

To concentrate the attention of the public on specific worthwhile films through the publication of a Photoplay Guide to the selected pictures being currently shown at local theatres.

To arrange family Friday night or week-end programs of selected films, and junior matinees of pictures particularly suited to the tastes of children, through cooperation with local exhibitors.

To endorse and further the use of visual education through motion pictures in the schools.

To arrange and promote occasional exhibitions of exceptional and cultural films that would not normally be shown in the commercial theatres.

### PUBLICATIONS

The National Board of Review and its Council as an aid to the groups carrying out these objectives furnished an informational service through its publications.

National Board of Review Magazine (monthly)  
\$2.00 a year for individual subscriptions  
\$1.00 a year to Council or club groups.

Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures  
\$2.50 a year when taken alone, available at a special rate of \$1.00 in conjunction with the Magazine.

Selected Pictures Catalog (annual).....25c

Special Film Lists .....10c ea.

Such as Selected Films for Children's Showings, Selected Book-Films, Educational Films, etc.

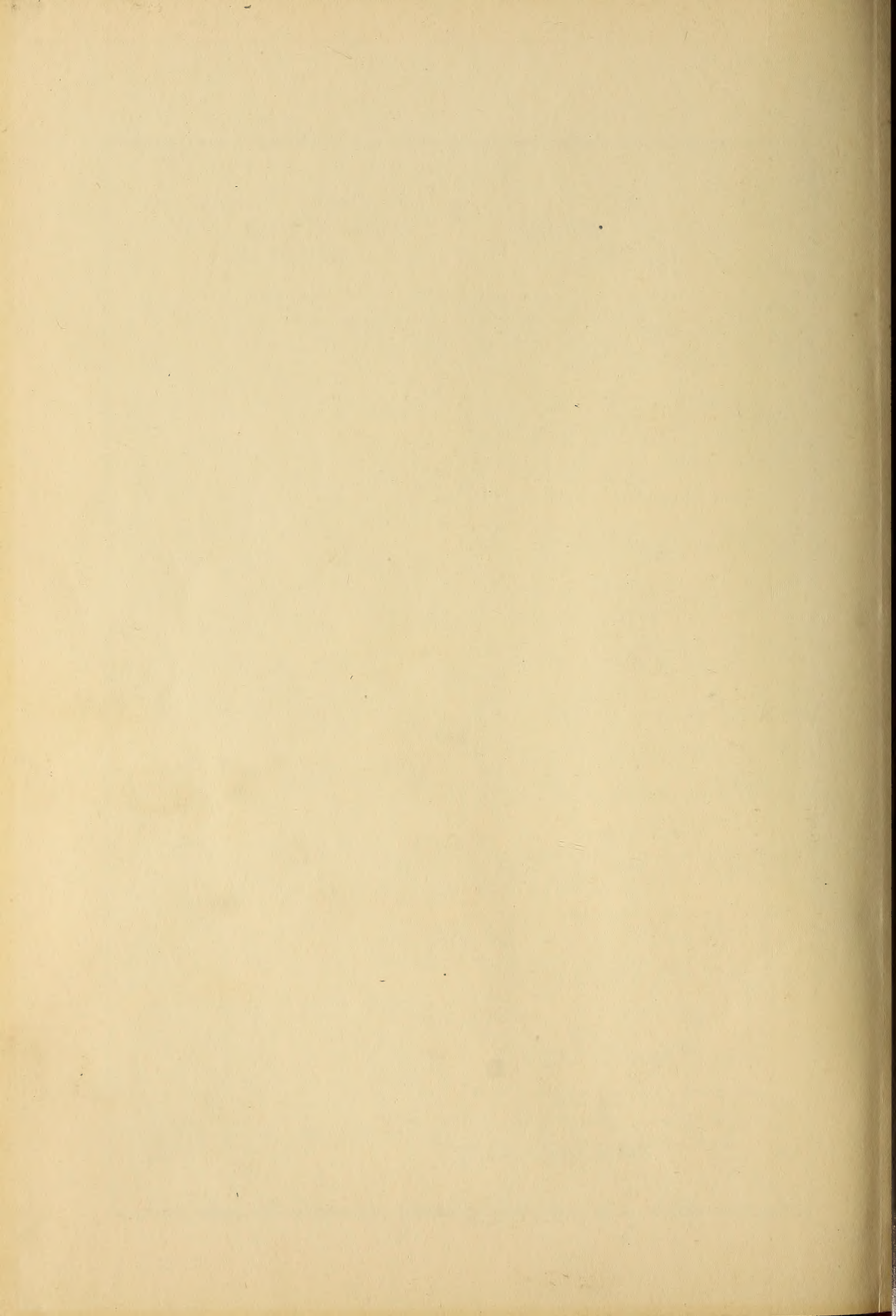
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National Board of Review—How It Works.....free

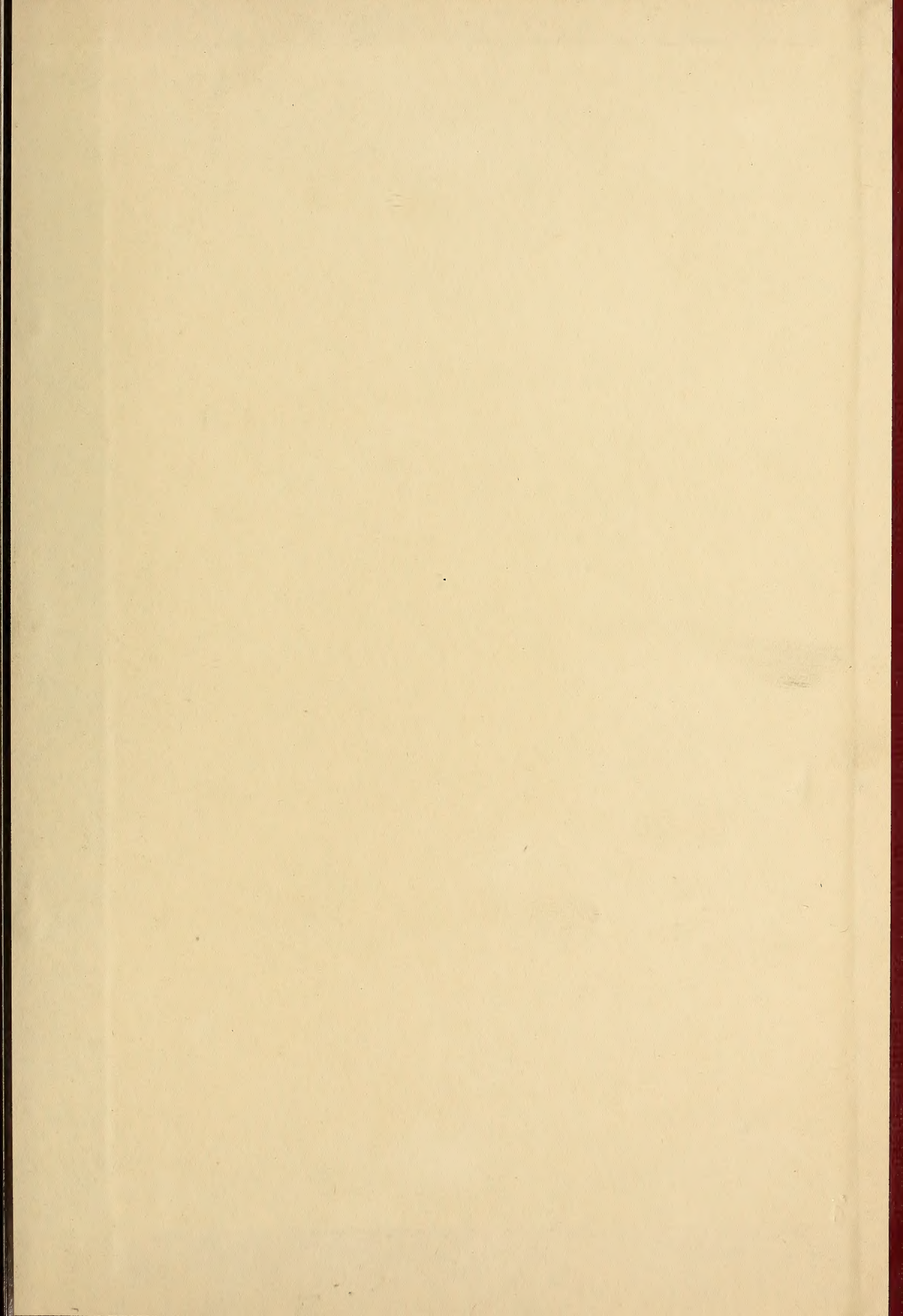
A Plan and a Program for Community Motion Picture Councils .....10c











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